HIT AND RUN!

HAROLD M. SHERMAN

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HIT AND RUN!

PRESCOTT'S THIRD BASEMAN HAD LEFT HIS FEET AS THE BAT CRACKED.

Hit and Run ! *Frontispiece* (*Page* 52)

HIT AND RUN!

BY

HAROLD M. SHERMAN

AUTHOR OF
ONE MINUTE TO PLAY
TOUCHDOWN!
HIT BY PITCHER, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

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To

NOEL SAINSBURY, Jr.

Close Friend Since First We Met

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HIT AND RUN!

CHAPTER I

THE NEW EAST SIDER

"Hi, there, Newcomer!"

Sandy Sanderson, on his way to Prescott High, stopped short and glanced about. Could this greeting have been addressed to him? This was only his second day in town and he had met few people.

"Wait a second! I'll go along with you!"

A genial-faced youth of about his own age was approaching from across the street. Sandy's face lightened. He wanted to become acquainted with the fellows as quickly as possible and feel at home in the place to which his parents had moved. Mighty nice of this chap to be warming up to him!

"You're the bird who just moved in across the river from Slug Pickens, aren't you?" came the query when the fellow who had hailed him reached his side.

Sandy nodded. "I guess so. The family across the river is named Pickens, though I haven't met Slug yet."

"You haven't?" grinned the youth confronting him. "Well, when you do . . ." He broke off abruptly and extended his hand. "Excuse me, my name's Hoop Holliday. I'm an East Sider, if that means anything to you."

Sandy took the proffered hand, somewhat perplexedly.

"Glad to meet you. My name's Horace Sanderson. Everybody calls me Sandy. Maybe I'm dumb but I don't 'get' you at all on 'East Sider'. . . ."

Hoop laughed. "I didn't think you'd been here long enough to 'get' that," he replied, "Well, let me wise you up to something. The fellows in this town are divided up into two gangs—those that live on the west side and those that live on the east. And these two gangs love each other like cats love dogs. I used to be leader of the East Side bunch and I know!"

"Who's leader now?" asked Sandy, interestedly.

"No one," answered Hoop. "The West Side

Terrors outnumber us two to one. It's as much as a guy's hide is worth to buck 'em."

"That so?" reflected Sandy. "What do you fellows call yourselves?"

"Wildcats," admitted Hoop.

"And you don't even show your claws? Some Wildcats!"

"We showed 'em, don't worry!" said Hoop. "But we had 'em pulled out of us. You're not sadder and wiser yet but you will be . . . living so close to Slug Pickens who's leader of the Terrors, with the border line between the East and West the river running between your houses!"

Sandy whistled. Then, reflectively, "Well, my folks have come here to live and I certainly intend to have a good time. Don't see why I should kowtow to Slug and his bunch just because I live on the other side of town."

Hoop grinned. "Say, it won't be any time at all before you'll be walking on the other side the street whenever a Terror passes—that's what they've got us doing!"

"That's rich!" said the town's newcomer. "Like to see them make me do it! This is a free country. I'll walk where I please!"

"Sure!" rejoined Hoop, "only don't let Slug catch you doing it!"

The two, having continued on the way toward the school, were now within sight of it.

"Sounds to me," said Sandy, "as though this Slug has you guys badly buffaloed. I'm glad you tipped me off. I'll be set for that baby when I meet up with him. If I'm supposed to be a Wildcat, here's one that can't be tamed!"

"That's the kind of talk!" encouraged Hoop, "and don't think we're not with you! Boy—if you can get away with it you know what you'll be? . . . Our next leader!"

Sandy's face flushed. "I'm not looking to be any leader," he replied, "but I don't intend to be stepped on if I can help it."

"More power to you!" was Hoop's parting retort.

And, within the next hour, all East Siders in Prescott High knew that a possible new champion of their lost cause had arrived. Secret elation was felt at the prospects of the West Side Terrors running up against further opposition. They had held unbroken sway for so

long that their rule had become traditional.

"This fellow Sandy doesn't know what he's bumping into," remarked Sly Cooley, "that's why he's acting so bold."

"What Slug Pickens and his gang won't do to him!" said Dan Overman, ruefully. "I really feel sorry for the guy."

"The latest victim's a mighty good build, though," reminded Pink Barringer. "You can't tell. If he decides to put up a scrap he may give those Terrors some trouble."

"One against thirty!" scoffed Hoop. "What a chance!"

"If only about ten other birds like Sandy would land on our side of town," wished Dan, "then maybe we could begin to talk back."

"As it is," lamented Sly, "we'll have to go on picking up the crumbs that those Terrors drop!"

"Which are darn few," added Hoop. "Anyhow, bunch, let's keep our eyes on Sandy and see what happens!"

Prescott High, unfortunately for the much-abused East Siders, was situated well upon the

west side of town which called for a daily invasion of what might technically have been termed "enemy territory." It was a section in which the East Side bunch did not tarry long once their business there was concluded. Past experience had taught them to keep moving. And, even then, they made it a rule to travel in group formation. If those Terrors ever caught a fellow alone! . . .

The following night Sandy Sanderson, with other members of the Ancient History class, was detained half an hour after school to complete some special map work. As several errands awaited him on arrival home, Sandy hurried through the work and finished ahead of his fellows. On leaving his desk to hand the drawings in, Hoop, sitting near by, touched his new friend on the arm.

"Take your time, Sandy. Better wait for us to go along!"

Sandy halted.

"Can't to-night. I'm in a hurry."

"Better wait just the same. We'll all be out of here in fifteen minutes and those Terrors are liable to be laying for you!"

The newcomer shrugged his shoulders.

"Let 'em lay!" he replied, in a scornful undertone. "They can't stop me going home when I want to!"

And out Sandy walked to the amazed concern of seven fellow East Siders whom he left behind.

Two blocks from Prescott High and toward the east, a pretty little park reposed. It was the town's one garden spot with a fountain and pool gracing its center, topped by an imposing piece of statuary. The park, with its diagonal paths, provided convenient short cuts to and from school. And down one of these paths the homeward-bound Sandy hastened.

"Here he comes, guys!" said the voice of a watcher behind a hedge.

"And he's all by his lonesome!" informed another.

"Leave him to me!" commanded a powerfully built youth, stepping out upon a highway into which the path led, "I'll put the Terror on him!"

The next instant East Prescott's new resident found himself abruptly face to face with a jaunty individual who focused a look on him intended as chilling.

"So you're the new East Sider, eh?" was Slug Pickens' opening salutation. "Well, you're on the West Side now. And—for your special information—we're running the town!"

Fellow Terrors appeared magically from the hedge at this declaration and took a glowering position behind their chieftain. The ambushed East Sider surveyed the odds with apparent unconcern.

"Is that so?" he retorted, quietly, and moved forward as though to push his way through.

"Yes, that's so!" fired Slug, blocking him off, "and what's more—you belong on the other side the street—see?"

"No, I don't see!"

"None of your back talk!" With this Slug shoved Sandy from the walk. "After this you take to the other side of the street any time you see us coming."

Sandy stepped back on the walk. "But I *don't* see you coming!" he grinned, good-naturedly. "I see you *going*. Beat it, you fellows—this sidewalk's wide enough for both of us fellows. . . ."

"The dickens it is!" interposed Slug, turning appealingly to his fellow Terrors. "Are

we going to let this fresh guy get away with this? If we do, the other East Side nuts . . ."

"I'll say not!" supported Slim Becker, Slug's right-hand man.

"This bird needs a lesson!" put in Phil Stone.

"Give him the works!" shouted Fat Watson.

The new resident of East Prescott stood his ground, seemingly much amused at the threats and implications.

"Listen, you!" sneered Slug, imposingly, "if you know what's good for you, you'll hit it across the street mighty quick and you'll keep out of our way from now on. We'll leave you alone so long as you stay on your side of town and do as we say, but . . ."

Sandy stiffened. "Who do you think you are? Nobody can tell me what to do! And if I want to be on this side of town . . ."

"Oh, my gosh!" It was Hoop's voice. He, with his small bunch of East Siders, having left the school together, had come suddenly in sight of the Terrors surrounding Sandy. "Don't let 'em spot us!" Hoop entreated, dropping down behind a hedge, "let's watch this thing!"

From a distance of comparative safety, the thoroughly disorganized group of Wildcats looked on.

"You sure are hunting for trouble!" blazed the chief of the Terrors, "and trouble is what you're going to get! Grab onto him, fellows!"

Two Terrors seized the defiant rebel at once, Sandy offering no resistance.

"So you won't take the other side of the street, eh?" Slug's tone was bantering.

"Not for you!" came the unflinching, quiet answer.

"All right, gang!" snapped the leader, "march this bird to the pool!"

"Poor Sandy!" muttered Hoop to his fellow Wildcats. "They're going to give him the old water cure!"

"And it's cold to-day, too!" whispered Dan Overman. "Pretty tough spring weather. Chances are all they want to do is throw a scare into him. I don't think they'd dare. . . ."

"Dare?" scoffed Pink Barringer, "those guys would dare anything!"

Arrived beside the pool, the prisoner was once more arraigned before the Chief Terror.

"Changed your mind now?"

East Prescott's new resident looked down at the water and then directly at his questioner—and shook his head, resolutely.

"No, sir—and I never will!"

"We'll see about that! Think we're bluffing, don't you? Be too bad to spoil that suit of clothes!"

The suggestion of a ducking appeared to have no effect.

"Remember—it's your last chance!" warned the Chief Terror, "and that water's like ice!"

"I hate to see Sandy get a deal like this!" protested Pink. "We ought to go to his help."

"And get thrown in ourselves?" counseled Hoop. "What'd we gain by that?"

"I'd feel better about it anyhow," replied Pink, miserably. "They tossed me in that pool once when none of you guys would raise a finger for me."

"Wait!" begged Hoop. "There's five more of them than us! No sense in being foolish! Sandy'll have to take his medicine like we've all done and some day maybe . . ."

"Razzberries!" muttered Pink. "It's been 'some day' too long already!"

But none of the Wildcats felt sufficiently

aroused to rush to the new Wildcat's aid. Sandy had not as yet been initiated to the terrors of the Terrors and this was something which seemed to be coming to every East Sider whether resistance was offered or not. And now, under Slug Pickens' direction, Sandy was being pushed to the edge of the pool and imminently threatened with a ducking.

"No!" East Prescott's new resident was heard to declare emphatically to a final demand.

"Then you're all wet!" shouted the commander-in-chief.

And, with a quick movement which brought gasps from the small group of onlooking Wildcats, the unresisting Sandy was lifted from his feet and hurled bodily over the low retaining wall into the water. He struck with a chilling splash and disappeared from sight as the Terrors howled in glee.

"There! How do you like that, East Sider?" was the cry which greeted Sandy when he came gulping to the surface.

"Of all dirty tricks!" denounced Pink. "Those guys ought to be doused themselves."

"You said it!" agreed Hoop.

In water five feet deep, Sandy stroked to the

retaining wall and caught hold of it, pulling his bedraggled self from the pool and sitting on the wall—grinning.

"Look at that! Can you beat it?"

Amazed, fellow Wildcats shook their heads in perplexity. This Sandy person was hard to understand. His complacency and utter unconcern in a situation such as this was all but unbelievable. What he should be doing was to be up and busting those Terrors on the noses!

"How about it?" came the stern voice of Slug Pickens. "You take the other side the street now?"

"Yes," came the answer, "when I get good and ready!"

"In he goes again, gang!"

And splash! went Sandy—backward into the pool!

"Hey, that's going too far!" raged Sly. "One ducking's plenty!"

"I don't care what the rest of you birds do," cried Pink, "I'm . . ."

"Keep your shirt on!" cautioned Hoop. "Our time's coming! You wait!"

Rebellion over the Terrors' treatment of their new member was replacing fear of conse-

quences. A thoroughly aroused little group saw Sandy once more swim to the side of the pool and pull himself up. There was no good-humored grin on his face now. He straddled the wall, slipped to the ground and stood, wet clothes clinging pastily to him, facing the circle of Terrors.

"All right, you guys! That'll be enough!" Sandy's voice was hard, though the words were spoken in a low tone.

"Is that so?" retorted the Chief Terror, facing him banteringly. "We'll be the judge of that! It's going to be just too bad for you! From now on, Sanderson, look out for us West Side Terrors, and see to it that you don't cross our path!"

"See to it you don't cross *mine!*" was the unexpected flash back. Springing suddenly into action the seemingly docile Sandy became a human whirlwind. He seized the surprised Slug Pickens about the waist before he could make a move in self-defense, swept him off his feet and spun around with him, lifting and pushing.

"Help!" yelled the Chief Terror, but—too late! He went scraping and clawing over the retaining wall and plop! into the pool!

"Great!" Hoop fairly shrieked. "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

"Sandy's got nerve!" shouted Pink. "Come on, guys! It's our time now!"

Set upon by exasperated Terrors, a grim-jawed Sandy now fought to defend himself. A skillful piece of dodging and a quick shove sent another Terror sprawling head foremost over the retaining wall into the unpleasantly cool water.

"We'll fix you for this!" bellowed the enraged Slug Pickens, coughing and spitting.

So concerned were the suddenly demoralized Terrors with the subduing of this captive that they were totally unaware of a quickly culminating attack from behind. But, with a rush and a roar, a courageously inspired pack of long-abused Wildcats bore down upon the outnumbering Terror gang, struggling with Sandy near the wall. Had the onslaught been planned in advance it could not have been more admirably timed. Each picking a man, the Wildcat attackers threw themselves against the figures at the wall and sent them flying over and into the pool to join the two Sandy had disposed of. The first crashing contact reduced the ranks of

the Terrors to even numbers with the attacking Wildcats and so furious was their assault, aided by the newest and pluckiest of Wildcats, that—within three minutes of the charge—every high and mighty Terror had been either pushed, lifted or thrown into the pool.

"Now, who's all WET?" they taunted as the water in the pool churned white with the frenzied efforts of the Terrors to get out.

"Beat it, fellows!" urged an elated Hoop. "Don't give 'em a chance to catch us! Come on, Sandy!"

And the small bunch of Wildcats wisely effected an instant but orderly retreat, hurling back biting rejoinders as they ran.

"Come back here you, 'hit and run' babies!" cried a greatly aggrieved and thoroughly soaked Chief Terror as he clambered from the pool and shook a dripping fist after them. But of course neither he, nor any of his dispirited followers were permitted any satisfaction. The Wildcats knew when they were "well off" and made sure of being well off before stopping.

"Wow—oh, wow!" panted Pink, with the retreat halted only after the friendly border of

the East Side was reached. "What sweet revenge! Put her there, Sandy, old boy—you started this! You're a martyr to our cause!"

"You're more than that!" insisted Sly. "You're our new leader!"

"Hey! Hey!" protested East Prescott's new resident, "none of that stuff! . . . I . . ."

"What did I tell you?" grinned Hoop. "You're a real Wildcat if there ever was one! Say—we gave those Terrors something to think about! Go to it, Sandy! We're behind you and we're in it to stick this time! You're our Napoleon and the Terrors' Waterloo!"

"Yea!" yelled fellow Wildcats, waxing enthusiastic.

"What do we care if we're outnumbered?" ranted Pink. "We'll pull our stuff unawares like we did to-day. Let 'em call us 'hit and run' babies if they want to! That's a good idea Slug handed us—'hit and run.' We'll wear 'em out chasing us! What do you say, Sandy? Are you with us?"

The new resident looked down at his soaked and wrinkled clothing and once more gave way to a grin.

"Well, fellows, it looks like this is one thing I can't get out of," he answered.

And from that moment on Sandy Sanderson, the town's newcomer, became a figure to be reckoned with in East and West Prescott.

CHAPTER II

REJUVENATED WILDCATS

Weeks of careful maneuvering followed in which rejuvenated Wildcats exercised great caution not to be caught off guard. It was evident that they had created a new respect for themselves among their much-feared foemen and no Wildcat wished to risk the temporary advantage held. Sandy too, in seriously taking command, had advised a "sniping campaign" to make up for a lack of numbers with which to meet the Terrors in the open. Surprise attacks were to be the order but nothing was to be started unless the Terrors started it first.

"We're not sticking our feet into any bear traps," said Sandy. "At least—not if we can help it. And those Terrors are probably just dying to get even for their ducking. But we're not going to give 'em the chance to take it out on us!"

Came a Thursday afternoon in early April

and an interesting notice posted on the bulletin board at Prescott High:

FIRST CALL!
Candidates for
BASEBALL TEAM!
Report Field House
Tomorrow—3:30
Coach Jed Potter

The notice drew enthusiastic attention, mostly on the part of the West Side crowd. Sandy, emerging from a classroom and seeing the gathering in front of the board, strolled over.

"Baseball!" he said, in pleased surprise. "That's great!"

"Not so good for us," Hoop, standing near by, answered. "The Terrors have about every position sewed up."

"Who said so?" Sandy rejoined, glancing warily about as he observed that those around the board were mostly West Siders.

"They filled six out of nine positions last year," informed Hoop. "And our three on the team didn't have a chance to show much. They even blamed us for losing the big game with Redfield."

"Huh!" was Sandy's low-voiced comment. "They won't get away with that stuff this year!"

"It's liable to be worse," said Hoop, dourly. "They elected Slug Pickens team captain which won't give us the ghost of a show!"

Sandy scratched his chin reflectively. So this was how matters stood! Things didn't look so bright at that!

Have to hand it to those Terrors for being wily politicians. They knew how to organize to give themselves every possible superiority.

"Well, so you're figuring on going out for the team?"

Slug Pickens had suddenly joined the group. His greeting of Sandy was tinged with sarcasm and feeling. Interest at once centered upon the two, with Sandy now accepted, due to his leadership of the hitherto downtrodden Wildcats, as Slug's foremost rival.

"You're right!" acknowledged the new East Sider, turning about to face his caustic questioner, "I'm not only figuring—I'm going out for the team!"

Slug grinned his derision.

"And what position are you going out for?" he demanded.

Sandy hesitated, eying his opponent testily.

"What do *you* play?" he retorted.

"Third," answered Slug, quickly.

"Then," decided Sandy, "I guess third's good enough for me!"

For a moment a prickly silence followed to be broken by sudden, uncontrollable snickers. The Chief Terror stood, face flushed, glaring at the fellow whose audacity had exceeded all bounds.

"The conceit of that guy!" razzed a Terror. "Slug's got third base cinched. He's the best third baseman old Prescott ever had!"

"Until *Sandy!*" put in Hoop, seeing a chance to heap coals on the fire.

"Bah!" was Slug's comeback. "Try out for third if you want to, but it isn't going to get you anywhere! Where did you ever play ball before?"

"On a baseball diamond mostly," wise cracked Hoop. "Where'd you suppose?"

The Chief Terror registered impatience.

"You birds are getting altogether too fresh!"

he charged, hotly. "You wait and see—not a one of you will make the team this year! You East Siders can't play ball and never could. Lost the big game last year for us! . . ."

"Yeah?" broke in Pink who, with Sly and Dan had joined Hoop and Sandy, "who was it struck out with the bases full?"

"And who let a wild pitch get past him for the winning run?" countered Slug, hitting at Pink who had played catch.

"There you go!" defended Pink, "still trying to hang the defeat on me! Slim soaked that ball a mile high. It was a wild pitch!"

"Wild pitch, my foot!" rasped Slim Becker, who had pitched for Prescott. "You couldn't hold me, that's all—the only thing you can catch is a cold!"

What promised to be more than verbal fireworks was brought to a halt by the appearance of Coach Potter who took in the situation at a glance and tactfully prepared to ease the tension.

"All raring to go, I see!" he remarked, dryly. "Well—save some of that fighting spirit for the diamond. We're stacking up against

the toughest schedule in our history this season and you fellows have got to be hot every game!"

"We'll be *hot* all right!" assured Slug, meaningfully, with an ominous look at Sandy and his fellow Wildcats.

The crowd about the bulletin board broke up into small groups and moved away . . . Terrors gravitating in one direction . . . Wildcats in the other. And just as soon as the Terrors were out of hearing, Hoop Holliday reached over to slap Sandy resoundingly on the back and exclaim: "What a bombshell! You didn't really mean it when you told Slug you were going out for third?"

"Sure I meant it!" insisted Sandy.

"But have you played third before?" asked Pink.

"No—second's my usual position," Sandy confessed, "but I've always wanted to have a crack at third and I couldn't miss the opportunity of rubbing Slug's fur the wrong way!"

"Didn't he come up for air, though?" laughed Dan, "but you're up against some stiff competition, Sandy—and no foolin'! Slug's actually the *goods!*"

"Glad of that," answered the new leader of the Wildcats. "I live on competition!"

"Boy!" exploded Sly, "if Sandy takes third away from Slug there'll be a young revolution in this town. And if Pink gets the catcher's job again and Hoop holds down the second sack like he did last year and if I can pick off one of the outfield positions we'll place four men on the team and give those West Side Terrors plenty of headaches!"

"Things are looking up," Hoop admitted, rosily. "Let's dig in, gang—and make Sly's dream come true!"

"Beginning with the first practice!" promised Pink, which declaration met with unanimous approval.

A grand total of eight East Siders put in an appearance at the Field House at 3:30 o'clock Friday afternoon and announced themselves as candidates for Prescott High's baseball team. This number eclipsed by four any previous number of East Side aspirants for team positions in recent years. The reason for such a surprising turnout was quite obviously and frankly—one Sandy Sanderson—described by

Clint Evers, school wit and news reporter—as the "yeast" in the Wildcats' uprising. Clint was a West Side product with a sense of humor and a peaceful disposition which enabled him to maintain an attitude of more or less neutrality. On anything of real issue, however, Clint quickly became partisan, proclaiming: "My West Side—may she always be right—but, right or wrong—my West Side!"

And this afternoon the West Side was plainly disturbed at the bold showing of the East Siders. To begin with, the Terrors had always held a special tier of lockers in the front and most convenient row. These lockers were never molested by the Wildcats who simply stood back and waited, from season to season, for the Terrors to claim the choice lockers and then console themselves with whatever ones were left. Not to-day, however. Slug Pickens, in going to his old locker, found that someone had been there before him and the door was locked.

"Who's been into my locker?" he roared, in a rough, gruff voice emulating the great huge bear of Goldilocks fame.

Then pitcher Slim Becker took hold the knob of his locker which refused to turn.

"Who's been into my locker?" he boomed, in a middle-sized voice.

And first baseman Phil Stone, when he looked at his locker, squealed in a high-pitched voice: "Someone's been into my locker and I've a darn good idea who it is!"

Phil Stone's remark was directed at Wildcat Sly Cooley who couldn't help blinking his eyes. And a greatly aggrieved Slim Becker singled out the guilty looking Hoop Holliday as his particular offender while Slug Pickens had eyes only for the newest and most meddlesome of all the Goldilocks—more commonly known as Sandy.

"GR-R!" growled the great huge Terror in his rough, gruff voice.

"Gr-r-r!" growled the middle-sized Terror in his middle-sized voice.

And "G-r-r-r!" growled Terror Number Three in his under-sized voice.

When the three modern Goldilocks heard all this growling around them they felt very sorry indeed that they hadn't meddled with all the Terrors' lockers instead of only three. But before they could say, "Jack Robinson," the bear-like Phil Stone and Slim Becker had

broken open the lockers they had used last season and thrown the clothes in them on the floor. Even this threatening gesture didn't send the Goldilocks trio rushing for the windows, climbing out and running home as fast as their legs would carry them. Oh, no! The days of such intimidation were over. And, as the enraged Slug Pickens was having trouble ripping open his locker, a Goldilockian hand was placed on his shoulder.

"If you know what's good for you," said a mildly warning voice, "you'll let that locker alone!"

"If you know what's good for you, you won't be putting your stuff in my locker!" Slug fired back.

At this moment Coach Jed Potter entered.

"What's going on in here?" he demanded.

"These guys have taken our lockers!" protested the Chief of the Terrors.

"*Your* lockers?" repeated the coach.

Slug's face colored. "Sure! We've had 'em every year!"

"Well, that isn't any sign you own 'em. Rule is—first come, first served."

"But . . . but . . ." started Slug.

With cries of triumph Sly and Hoop gathered up their scattered belongings and flung them back into the lockers they had selected while Sandy gently and mockingly removed Slug's hand from his.

"Now, will you be good?" he said in an undertone.

And not a Terror had a word to say in reply, all being too dumbfounded for expression. But the overjoyed Wildcats had plenty to say among themselves, daring also to laugh outright as three most disgruntled Terrors sought out three unused lockers in the second row back of the benches. And, if Clint Evers had been a true and unbiased chronicler of events he would have been forced to record that first blood in the rekindled strife between Wildcats and Terrors had been drawn by the despised and lowly East Siders. As it was, Clint simply refused to take note of the happening. The news of it, however, was published quickly and widely by word of mouth and residents of East Prescott secretly rejoiced that their boys were again showing the spunk of old.

As for Sandy, new Wildcat leader, his comment following the successful termination of

the opening skirmish assumed General Grant proportions: "We'll fight it out on this line if it takes all summer!"

And now to place as many East Siders as possible on the baseball team!

CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE FOR TEAM POSITIONS

No longer cowed by the West Side Terrors, out fighting teeth and toenails for places on the team, the East Side Wildcats put extra zeal and feeling in the practice sessions. The Terrors accepted the challenge by grimly battling to preserve their dominant majority on the nine with the hottest competition developing around the third base corner where Wildcat Sandy Sanderson was giving the admittedly great Terror Slug Pickens a nip-and-tuck struggle for supremacy. Sandy, the comparative newcomer, had demonstrated early that he knew baseball and that he was especially familiar with infield play. At third his whizzing running in on bunts and flipping underhanded throws catching the hitter at first, were the talk of the squad.

"Sandy gets that ball to first when he's off balance and almost standing on his head," observed Hoop. "How he does it is beyond me!"

"And the way he grabs off those line drives that are ticketed for two baggers down the foul line!" exclaimed Pink. "Say—Slug's got the fight of a lifetime on his hands to hold Sandy even!"

At the bat Slug had been able to maintain a margin more in keeping with his name. A natural "slugger," he had been hitting viciously in batting practice while Sandy, hitting less spectacularly, had contented himself with but meeting the ball squarely.

"Coach Potter's got a tough choice between those two!" team followers remarked as it came time for the first game line-up to be announced. And everyone, knowing well the rivalry of East and West, could not but wonder what the effect would be regardless of the selection made.

"Either side is sure to take it hard," Uncle Joe Bailey, town merchant and philosopher prophesied. "Why, the only way I've been able to get along in this place is to live part of the time on the west side and part of the time on the east. And even then I've gotten so worked up that I've fought with myself."

But Prescott, long used to being torn apart in the middle, had come to accept the sectional

strife as part of the life of the town. Latest doings of East Siders or West Siders provided a goodly share of each day's sensations and what would any community amount to without the stimulation of exciting happenings?

"Hey, guys! Snap it up! The list's being posted!"

Outside the Field House this Wednesday afternoon a highly interested crowd of team candidates, students and citizens had gathered. Naming of those who had made the baseball nine promised a thrill if not an insurrection!

"Who's *on?*" cried those further back as the notice was thumb-tacked on the bulletin board. "Read it off, somebody!"

A tremendous crush followed with everyone trying to get near enough to see the board.

"Wait a minute! . . . Wait a minute!" begged Clint Evers, school reporter, who had been one of the first to get in line for the announcement and was now pressed so hard against the board as to be fearful of smashing the glass. "Don't push, you rowdies! I'll read it if you don't knock the breath out of me!"

"Atta boy, Clint! Back up, you folks! Give

him air! . . .'' directed a self-appointed lieutenant.

The jam about the board diminished and the silence of expectancy followed.

''Shoot!'' begged a voice.

But Clint, taking in the line-up at a glance, could only gasp and stare again, eyes widening.

''What's the matter, West Side?'' taunted someone near by. ''Either read it or get out and let a guy read who can!''

Gulpingly, Clint found his voice.

''Batting order and line-up,'' he announced, and then followed with the names, pausing reluctantly each time he was forced to utter the name of an East Sider. At the conclusion there occurred a tremendous uproar.

''Whoopee!'' shouted Wildcat Dan Overman, ''we placed four men on the team!''

''And Sandy beat Slug out for third!'' raved Pink.

''But Coach shifted Slug to short,'' observed Sly. ''Wow! Four's the highest number we've ever put on the nine!''

''Who said the East Siders couldn't play ball?'' razzed Hoop, with a glance in the direc-

tion of much-chagrined Terrors. "We'll show you West Side babies this year!"

"Aw, dry up!" came a chorused protest.

And, as the crowd dispersed, leaving only those more directly concerned to study the bulletin board, team candidates of East and West Prescott were thrown closely together. To the Wildcats, in their moment of mad joy, every one of their names in the line-up stood out as though printed in capital letters:

SLY COOLEY .....right field
Phil Stone .....first base
Tom Perry .....center field
Slug Pickens .....shortstop
SANDY SANDERSON .....third base
HOOP HOLLIDAY .....second base
Rudie Rudolph .....left field
PINK BARRINGER .....catch
Slim Becker .....pitch

Substitutes: DAN OVERMAN, utility infielder; Fat Watson, utility outfielder; Steve Morris, relief pitcher.

"There! I guess that will hold you birds for

a while!" fired Pink, unable to resist this broadside at the Terrors.

"Not a one of us was going to make the team this year!" mocked Sly, with a laughing glance at the glowering Slug Pickens.

"You pipe down!" warned the Chief Terror.

"This from you—who had third base cinched!" went on Sly.

Sandy caught Sly's arm. "Don't rub it in," he begged, in a low voice. "We don't want to start anything."

"So Sandy's trying for the team wouldn't get him anywhere, eh?" roasted Pink, recklessly. "I guess he didn't make *you* back water this time!"

Flush faced, the chief of the Terrors elbowed his way through the crowd to confront Prescott's veteran catcher.

"Listen, you!" he blazed, "this piece of cheese didn't beat me out for anything. I made the team, didn't I? If Coach thinks I'm better at shortstop, that's his business."

"Slug's right," agreed Sandy.

"That you're a piece of cheese?" rejoined Pink, hotly.

This brought a howl from the Terrors.

"Naw," grinned the new leader of the Wildcats, "but short's just as good as third and if you . . ."

"Yeah!" insisted Pink, "and if you made it too hot for Slug around that old third base corner—which you did!—then the only thing left for Coach was to transfer him to a position where there was less competition!"

Crack!

Slug's fist shot out and caught Pink on the point of the jaw. The blow, coming so unexpectedly and launched with such force, toppled the heavy-set Wildcat. Instantly fellow Wildcats sprung to his defense and soon all were embroiled in a battle in which they were greatly outnumbered. All but Sandy Sanderson. Instead of joining the fight he leaped among the contestants, exhorting them to "lay off there."

"Cut it, guys!" he pleaded, "this isn't getting you anywhere!"

"Get Sandy!" yelled a Terror, starting for the intended peacemaker. "He's trying to pull a slicker! He knows we've got his gang right where we want 'em!"

And Sandy went down under the combined

attack of three Terrors, striving only to defend himself. The conflict was not one of long duration. The Wildcats were too overwhelmed for that. But the drubbing that each Wildcat took was a classic one as attested by black eyes, sore jaws and various and sundry bruises.

"Now any of you Wildcats got any more to say?" demanded Slug Pickens, surveying the battered East Siders.

His taunting question was met by a sullen silence.

"All right, then!" said the Chief Terror. "You birds have had this coming for some time. Been getting too cocky again. You know your place and you'd better keep it from now on because we're not going to stand for any more monkey work—see?"

The Wildcats glanced ruefully at one another.

"That goes for you, too, Spineless," Slug's biting retort was aimed at the badly marked Wildcat leader, who had quite obviously been singled out for more severe punishment.

Sandy faced the Chief Terror quietly.

"We don't take orders from you fellows and we never will," he answered, grimly, "so put

that in your pipes and smoke it. But we didn't have any business razzing you guys over team positions. That wasn't good sportsmanship. . . ."

Slug laughed harshly.

"Oh, so you're apologizing, eh? Well, isn't that nice? I think that's just too sweet for words! What do you say, men? Shall we promise not to spank again if little kittens keep from acting naughty?"

"Sure!" replied the Terrors, derisively.

Sandy's face turned crimson.

"I didn't mean it that way!" he sought to explain.

"No, I guess not!" retorted Slug, "the whole bunch of you are crawling. Take to the trees, you pussycats!"

The dejected East Siders looked at one another uncertainly.

"Come on, guys," urged Sly, spiritlessly. "We might as well be moving on."

A humiliated group of fellows—but a few moments before proud and boastful—shambled slowly and painfully off. They were followed, as they retreated, by catcalls and mocking jeers of Terrors again in the ascendancy. And when

they had gotten safely out of range, all turned, as if by common consent, to vent their feelings upon the newly crowned leader.

"What a fine Chief Wildcat you turned out to be!" reproved Pink, glaring at Sandy.

"Going back on us!" charged Hoop, "giving in to those guys! Crying quits!"

"I didn't cry quits," answered Sandy, "but you fellows were just plain boobs! Those Terrors have been waiting their chance to get even ever since you ducked 'em in the fountain and you ought to have known better than get 'em riled. We can't ever expect to beat the Terrors in a hand-to-hand scrap. There's too many of 'em. You birds just invited trouble without figuring consequences and you went against orders. . . ."

"What orders?" sniffed Dan, nursing a tender nose.

"To wait till the Terrors started things," replied Sandy. "Besides, my idea of our getting the best of them was to be good sports about it. And you fellows, right off, as soon as we make a showing by getting four men on the team, have to begin razzing Slug and his gang. We'd already won another victory but

you weren't willing to stop at that. You spoiled it all and lost all the ground we'd gained by this drubbing."

"Yeah . . . and why?" demanded Pink, still peeved, "because you lost your nerve!"

"It wasn't a case of nerve!" insisted the Chief Wildcat. "Just common sense. What we want to do is beat these Terrors and make 'em like it without giving them any opportunity to hit back. Just do things and not act sore about it or be mean. Let 'em see we don't intend to be stepped on—like the stunt we put over on the lockers. Those are the things that hurt . . . but a bone head like we pulled to-day gives the West Side enough satisfaction to last for weeks!"

The group of Wildcats consulted one another glumly.

"I get you," said Sly, finally, "but you haven't been in Prescott long, Sandy . . . and if you knew how we hated . . ."

"Hate!" took up the Chief Wildcat. "That's just where you fellows in this town have been wrong for years. What's the fun of hating? Can't the East Side try to outdo the West Side without getting mad about it? Did I hate the

Terrors because they soaked me in the pool? No. Have I flew off the handle at the way Slug's treated me? . . . Not so you could notice. But I worked my head off to beat him out for third base and I did that . . . even though Coach did shift him to short. That's what I call a real way to get even. You don't prove anything by brute force. It's the guy who's smarter to-day who really wins. But he doesn't have to advertise his smartness. That's the thing that got us these black eyes . . . and, take it from me, we deserved 'em!"

"*You* didn't," confessed Pink, now suddenly sheepish, "but we sure did! . . . Thanks, Sandy, for putting us wise to ourselves. We'll be better followers from now on. Lead us out of this wilderness, oh, Chief!"

Despite his many bruises, each Wildcat managed a grin.

"Guess the Terrors figured they'd put us out of commission for the opening game," said Hoop. "I've got a knee that feels like a freight car had hit it but I'm going to be in that lineup if I have to take the diamond on crutches."

"That's the spirit!" counseled Sandy, "and the real way to show up the Terrors. Let's us

fellows put up such a brand of baseball that it leaves them in the shade!"

The whole town of Prescott knew of the outbreak by supper time and tongues wagged both east and west while Terrors noisily celebrated their latest conquest over the enemy. Clint Evers, having witnessed the scuffle from a safe distance, reported the affair in the *Prescott Morning Blade,* leaving much to be read between the lines.

RIVALRY KEEN FOR TEAM PLACES

Considerable feeling was evidenced by East and West Side candidates when Coach Potter's selections for places on the baseball team were posted on the Field House bulletin board late yesterday.

Slug Pickens, West Side star, was this season considered more valuable at shortstop than at third base and Sandy Sanderson, newcomer to Prescott, was given Slug's old berth. Whether Sandy will be able to hold this hot corner down is problematical. His playing is quite apt to be affected by having to fill the shoes of such a player as Slug, though the East Siders claim he's the great Slug's equal. In fact their loud proclaiming of Sandy's merits

precipitated a warm little argument but the East Prescott lads finally left convinced that Slug was still King. . . .

"And *how!*" laughed Slim Becker, pitching ace, when he read the account.

"What a write-up!" approved Slug. "That guy Clint is *there* when it comes to giving us the breaks in print! I'll bet those Wildcats are sure sweating under the collar."

"You said it!" piped Phil Stone, first sacker. "We'll not hear a peep out of them from now on. I never saw a more whipped looking bunch in my life. Pink'll be lucky to see well enough to catch Saturday!"

"I hope he can, though," said Slim, sobering. "Hate to hand it to him but that boy Pink is the only one who can hold me. And we've got a chance to clean up this year if we only get the right support!"

"Support!" snorted Fat, "with Pink letting that pitch get through him in the Redfield game! . . ."

"Well, it really was pretty high," hedged Slim. "Of course I'd never admit that to him anyway!"

"Any time *we* admit anything!" exploded

Slug. "Give those guys an inch and they take a yardstick! I can't figure this Sandy, though. What do you fellows make of him?"

"If you'd ask me I'd say he has a streak running up and down his spinal column," volunteered Tom Perry. "He's just what you called him—'Spineless.' "

"He is and he *isn't,*" reflected Slug. "Else he'd have been scared stiff when we ducked him in the pool."

"Huh!" explained Rudie Rudolph. "It wasn't nerve that day! He didn't know us so well then. He was just foolish."

"If I thought he really did beat me out for third . . ." mused Slug, "and that Coach hadn't put me at short because . . ."

"Say, I wouldn't worry my head about that," reassured Elim. "You're better than Sandy ever thought of being."

"Just the same if I thought . . ." went on Slug, "well—I'd bust that guy's head!"

Two snappy afternoons of practice as a team caused student onlookers to cheer the selections made by Coach Potter as the most likely looking nine to represent Prescott in years. The

infield, composed of two West Siders and two East Siders, alternating from third to first base in positions, fairly sparkled with breath-taking plays. Neither Sandy at third, nor Slug at short, nor Hoop at second nor Phil at first wished to be held accountable for gumming up a play and each infielder fairly outdid himself in efforts to hang onto the ball when it came to him and also to get it away quickly wherever the play called.

"There's going to be a hot time in that old infield this year!" sang reporter Clint Evers, "and I don't mean a couple of 'maybees'!"

The work of the outfielders was more individual, so Sly Cooley's competition with Tom Perry and Rudie Rudolph was not very noticeable. True, he once accused Tom of not properly backing him up on a drive which eluded him but fires were allowed to smolder without bursting into flame.

The Terrors were greatly perplexed at the Wildcats' attitude anyway. After the drubbing which had been administered them, Slug Pickens and gang had expected attempted reprisals or, at least the radiation of a frigid atmosphere. But when the Wildcats came up

smiling for baseball practice on Thursday afternoon, some yet bearing the marks of battle—the wary Terrors were nonplused.

"They've got something up their sleeves," Slim guessed, "but what it is is beyond me!"

And so the grinning Wildcats kept the Terrors in suspense.

CHAPTER IV

THE OPENING GAME

The season's opening game was with Atwood, a little school twenty miles from Prescott, which usually assembled a surprisingly good nine for its size. And, as Prescott always journeyed to Atwood to play, the town made the contest an annual feature occasion. The home band of eleven pieces was out, Atwood pennants were waved, tin horns were tooted and bonfires were burned even though Atwood had never yet succeeded in downing her mightier foe. Once, when Prescott had been carried to twelve innings for victory by a courageous Atwood nine, the bells in the three churches had been rung and the whistle on the Atwood Pickle Factory blown. In such manner did Atwood philosophically find joy and honor in close defeat.

"These Atwood folks are something like us," observed Sandy, shortly before the game. "They're so used to taking the short end of

things that they've learned to make the best of it. And one of these days—who knows?—maybe their worm will turn!"

How nearly prophetic Sandy's words were to be was shown in the next hectic two hours. Prescott did nothing her first turn at bat but took the field with the air of a lion toying with a mouse. The mouse, however, refused to nibble at balls just wide of the plate which Slim Becker offered up and gained two lives on base before Slim got warmed up to his task. Then Pink, seeing a chance to catch the Atwood runner on second off his base, made a hurried peg down to Hoop which struck the dirt in front of him and caromed off his shins into right field. Sly Cooley dashed in, making the pick-up off his shoe tops as the Atwood runner rounded third at top speed.

"Home" shrieked the Prescott infield and Sly, straightening, threw. But his peg was also wild, carrying over catcher Pink's head and bounding back against the grand stand, permitting the first Atwood runner to score standing up and the second to pull up safely at third. One run in, man on third and no outs and all this damage done on no hits!

Slug spit angrily in his pad and walked around in circles between second and third.

"What hams you guys are!" he barked. "Give it to Sandy next and make it unanimous. You Wildcats are out to toss this game away!"

"Hold me up, you fellows!" begged Slim, walking back on the mound.

"Steady down in there!" called Hoop. "Don't walk any more, big boy! You put 'em on the bases, you know!"

"Pipe down, Hoop!" ordered Sandy, from third, "and play ball!"

"That's all right but they're not going to get away with . . ." started Hoop, when the next batter hit the first pitch hard toward third.

The runner on third made a move as though to try to score, then drove back for the bag as Sandy advanced with hands outstretched for the ball. In his eagerness to make the play and concerned over the manner in which his team mates had messed up the previous play, Prescott's new third baseman found his fingers turned to thumbs. The ball bounced in his glove and out again. The runner on third danced away from the bag and, seeing that the baseman was temporarily confused, not being

able to locate the ball, made a frenzied dash for home. Finding the horsehide too late to make a play at the plate, Sandy whizzed it to first in a desperate attempt to cut the batter down but his hurried throw pulled Phil Stone from the bag and Atwood had two runs in and a man on first with none out. . . .

". . . and nobody going to get out!" sang a delirious Atwood fan.

"What did I tell you!" bawled a highly pleased Slug, taking care that his voice did not carry in to the bench where an agitated Coach Potter was seated. "You East Side dubs can't play ball—never could!" Then to Sandy, "So you beat me out for third, did you? What a laugh!"

And, to add bitterness to the Wildcats' cup of vinegar, the following batter hit a sizzling grounder through short which the great Slug Pickens captured with a one-handed stab and tossed to second for a force out, Hoop relaying the ball on to first to complete a double play.

"Yea, Slug!" cheered the small band of Prescott rooters who had made the trip with the team, "that's playing ball!"

A few moments later, Slim—bearing down—

struck the next batter out on three pitched balls to end the inning in which two runs had been scored against him without a hit having been made. He strode off the diamond, throwing his glove down angrily in the grass behind third base coaching box as he went to the bench.

"Rotten!" greeted Coach Potter as his players trotted in. "Settle down, you fellows! Nothing to get excited about. Get that ball before you throw it and know what you're going to do with it. Slug, you're first up. Let's see a hit!"

But the Atwood nine, encouraged by their early lead, backed up their pitcher's offerings with phenomenal fielding and converted possible hits into dazzling outs. The game thus became air-tight with neither team gaining a real scoring opportunity until the last of the sixth when Atwood got men around to second and third with two out . . . and Bell, their biggest hitter, up!

"Put the old game on ice!" pleaded Atwood fans, now grown hysterical. "Bring those boys in, Bell. You can do it!"

Bell tried mightily. His hit went screaming on a line toward third and both runners left

their bases, heads down, on a dash for home.

"It's a two bagger!" screamed someone involuntarily as the ball left the bat.

But Prescott's third baseman had left his feet, almost impulsively, as the bat cracked, shooting his gloved hand into the air. Into this glove the white streak disappeared with a smack, the force of which toppled the baseman over backward but did not loosen his grasp on the ball.

"Side out!" bellowed the umpire as Sandy struggled to his feet with Atwood townspeople giving him generous applause.

"About time you were doing something," Slug said in his ear as the two jogged to the bench.

But there was a respectful gleam in the Chief Terror's eyes. This Wildcat Sandy had just made *some* catch!

"Great work," Coach Potter complimented as Sandy seated himself with fellow Wildcats clapping him on the back, "but you've still got to get back those two runs, fellows! Atwood's plenty tough to-day and their pitcher Ellis is in mid-season form. You know you've only made three hits off him so far? Time you

were stepping out. Phil, you're first up! Get on, boy!"

Phil responded with a hit to deep short which he beat out to first by great running. Tom Perry, ordered to sacrifice, bunted foul twice and then straightened out one for a Texas leaguer over second and there were men on first and second with none out and Slug Pickens up!

"Old clean-up hitter!" yelled a Prescott rooter. "Bring 'em both in, Slug! Sock one to the fence!"

But Slug, in his previous times at bat, had not been able to get the ball past the infield and Coach Potter, playing safe, called for a bunt.

"Aw, let me hit it!" pleaded Slug. "I'm due for one!"

"Bunt!" repeated the coach.

And Prescott's heaviest hitter strode to the plate, indicating his displeasure by clipping the end of his bat against little uneven clods of dirt as he walked.

"Boy, but it hurts that guy to take orders!" whispered Hoop to Sandy as the two selected their sticks, "and he doesn't like it much that

you and I are up next. If he moves Phil and Tom up a base it gives us Wildcats a chance to bring 'em in and tie up this old ball game."

"Yes . . . and if we don't do it," replied Sandy, in an undertone, "we'll get an unmerciful razzing!"

Plunk!

On the first ball pitched, Slug, sourly obeying the Coach's dictation, reached out and tapped the horsehide in front of the plate. It was not an exceptionally placed bunt but it served its purpose. Pitcher Ellis, uncertain whether Slug would swing on the ball or bunt, was caught a bit off guard for his first pitch had been intentionally high and wide . . . a ball that he figured the batter would let pass. As he came racing tardily in, he almost collided with the Atwood catcher who seized the inert sphere and, seeing that there was no chance of cutting the runner down at third, made a speedy peg to first, retiring Slug.

First half of the seventh—men on third and second and only one out. Prescott's great scoring opportunity!

"All right, Sandy!" urged the Coach, "she's up to you, boy!"

"Come through!" begged Hoop, as he accompanied Sandy halfway to the plate. "Get back those runs we lost. Show those Terrors we *can* play ball!"

Slug Pickens, instead of returning to the bench, squatted down behind the first base coaching box, eyes fixed sullenly upon the approaching batter. Here was another test of nerve. Sandy was coming up in a crisis when so much as a little single could mean two runs and a tie score. Would he be equal to it?

"Strike one!" Sandy had let the pitch go by as he apparently studied the infield which was playing in close.

"Strike two!" The Atwood pitcher was putting everything he had on the ball and Sandy swung short and sharp at this but missed cleanly. He stepped from the box, laid his bat down and rubbed his hands in the dirt as Slug bowed his head to conceal a pleased grin.

"I've got his number now," the Chief Terror said to himself, "Sandy's okay except in pinches—then he blows. He messed up that drive in the first inning with a man on third . . . too nervous and anxious to handle the ball. Now he's up there, popeyed, hitting at

the moon because he knows he's got to produce and he can't stand the gaff!"

"Make 'em be good in there!" begged Hoop, making a megaphone of his hands.

The Atwood catcher smacked a fist into his mitt and extended his hands.

"Finish him up, big boy!" he called to the pitcher.

And pitcher Ellis, feeling that the batter would be expecting him to waste one, attempted to whiz over a third strike.

The batsman, however, was wider awake than he had been given credit. Observing that the ball was coming close in, Sandy angled his body just a trifle, batting from the left side of the plate, and swung in such a manner that his bat sent the ball to the left side of the diamond when he might ordinarily have been expected to hit toward the right. The result was a looping drive which dropped between and over the heads of the Atwood shortstop and third sacker and rolled into left field. And by the time the shortstop had chased out and grabbed the ball from under the nose of a madly clutching fielder, two swiftly running Prescott men had clattered across the home plate.

Score: Atwood, 2; Prescott, 2! A man on first and only one out!

"The lucky stiff!" breathed Slug. "He hit that on the handle!"

Though wildly imploring their team to put the game on ice with this rally, the small contingent of Prescott rooters were forced to be content with their nine's knotting the count as Hoop and Rudie, next two batters, went down on easy infield taps. Slug, resuming his position back on the diamond for Atwood's half of the seventh, exclaimed in disgust at the cheers given one Sandy Sanderson.

"Some fluke hit you made!" he called, from behind his gloved hand.

The leader of the Wildcats glanced his way in surprise.

"Fluke nothing!" he protested, "I placed that!"

"Aw, razzberries!" was Slug's retort, further comment being cut short by resumption of the game.

Slim Becker made short work of the Atwood batters, determined that their two unearned runs would be their sum total for the afternoon, and Prescott went into the first half of

the eighth set upon breaking the tie. But the Atwood pitcher had a few ideas of his own—ideas very similar to Slim's. And Atwood supporters went wild as he sent two Prescott hitters to their bench on strikes, forcing the third to succumb on a weak pop fly to first.

"Atwood's sure giving us a work out!" exclaimed a Prescott rooter, wiping perspiration from his face. "We'll have to quit picking on 'em for the opening game if they get any tougher!"

Atwood fans roared as their first batter touched Slim Becker for a scratch hit to start the last of the eighth. But the roars turned to groans when the next batter hit into a double play, Hoop to Slug to Phil. The third batter then fouled out ignominiously to Pink who stood under the high fly for what seemed interminable seconds before it finally dropped into his big mitt.

"First of the ninth, gang," reminded Coach Potter as his boys came in. "Don't let this old game go extra innings. End her right here!"

"Watch me!" said Phil Stone, resolutely, selecting his bat.

His team mates watched from the bench and saw Phil come trailing back, another strike-out victim.

"That guy's a regular Walter Johnson," he complained, as he slumped down in his seat. "He's getting stronger every inning."

"I'll crack him," promised Tom Perry, who had doubled earlier in the game.

But Tom succeeded only in topping the ball on a mighty swing, resulting in a weak roller to the pitcher who threw him out at first with steps to spare.

"That's pitching!" complimented the Atwood catcher, coming out in front of the plate to hand his hurler the ball. "Now for number three!"

"The big one left!" insisted Prescott rooters as Slug Pickens was seen to stride toward the plate.

"Let's see you land on it!" Sandy shouted after him.

The Chief Terror looked scowlingly back over his shoulder and mumbled something unintelligible.

"Look out!" warned Hoop, "he thinks you're kidding him!"

"I'm not," rejoined Sandy, "I'd really like to see him pickle it!"

Hoop shook his head, grudgingly. "I'd like to see the big stiff strike out," he said. "You and I are up next inning . . . maybe we could . . ."

"Listen!" commanded Sandy, "Slug's just as much a member of this team as we are and we're playing to beat Atwood—so if Slug can help—more power to him!"

"Yeah," said Hoop, dryly, "he was tickled green when you made your hit, wasn't he? Why should you be for him?"

"I'm not for him," rejoined Sandy. "Don't ever get that idea! But I'm first, last and all the time—for the team!"

"Just the same . . ." started Hoop, but he never finished.

There was the solid smack of ball meeting bat and a frenzied cry from Prescott followers, their eyes following a fast-traveling streak, rising on a line between right and center fields . . . rising . . . rising . . . rising . . . while two figures in the outfield turned their backs and ran frantically toward the fence, then leaped despairingly upward as the ball whizzed

over their heads and disappeared into the street beyond.

"A home run!" shrieked Prescott rooters in a delirium of joy as Atwood fans sat wrapped in silent anguish and pitcher Ellis, on seeing his pitched ball leave the ball park, sank his chin upon his chest. A tough break after the magnificent game he had pitched.

"Never mind, old man!" consoled his catcher. "We'll get it back for you our half."

The grinning Slug completed his round of the bases by jumping triumphantly on the home plate before jogging to the bench. Thanks to him—the Terrors were in their glory again. What would Prescott's ball team be without the Terrors anyway?

Sandy, next at bat, had rushed out to greet and to compliment the home run clouter. He extended his hand as Slug crossed the plate and started for the bench with the field a riot of sound. But Slug, seeing his intended welcomer, purposely ignored him, pushing on past, eyes elsewhere.

"Booh!" shouted a discerning East Sider among the rooters, but his yell was quickly squelched by surrounding West Siders.

The Atwood pitcher, recovering from the shock of this mighty blow, set determinedly to work upon the next batter and Sandy fell a victim before burning pitches with which he could not connect.

"Guess there's no doubt now whether that guy beat me out for third or not," said Slug in a satisfied tone to Slim as the team took the field for the last of the ninth.

"Sandy hasn't played such a bad game at that," replied Slim. "Don't forget—his hit scored two men."

"Yeah!" admitted Slug, reluctantly, "but mine won the game!"

"And his catch saved two more runs from being scored," added Slim, picking up his glove from the grass near the base line.

"Hey!" protested Slug, "you turned Wildcat, Slim?"

"Not me!" denied Slim, going toward the mound. "But I'm not blind, even if I am a Terror . . . and you got to give credit where credit's due!"

Two pinch hitters, batting respectively for the Atwood catcher and pitcher, failed to solve Slim Becker's dazzling slants and, a moment

later, the lead-off man on the home team's batting order walloped a long fly to Tom Perry in deep center for the last out in what had proved a thrilling game.

Score: Prescott, 3; Atwood, 2.

And it was with sighs of genuine relief that the Prescott nine left the field, readily acknowledging that the Atwood aggregation had given them all the fight they wanted as a season's opener. Coach Potter expressed himself as pleased that the nine experienced only one bad inning in so far as fielding was concerned but declared that he was far from satisfied with Prescott's hitting. According, however, to Clint Evers' story of the game, the only members of the team who made a good showing were West Side Terrors. And when fellow Wildcats read the headlines they rightfully grew indignant.

SLUG PICKENS' HOMER
BREAKS UP TIGHT GAME

SLIM BECKER'S GREAT PITCHING
HOLDS ATWOOD IN CHECK AFTER
MATES' ERRORS PERMIT 2 RUNS

Barringer, Holliday, Cooley And
Sanderson Commit Costly Misplays

There was no real mention or recognition of the vital part a certain third baseman who hailed from the east side of town had played in the victory.

"After all, we really couldn't expect anything different," reflected Pink. "But there ought to be some way we could force a square deal in the news."

"That'll come one of these days," predicted Hoop, with a wise wink. "I've an idea. . . ."

"What is it?" demanded Sandy.

"I'm not saying just yet," rejoined Hoop, evasively, "but if she works, when the time comes to pull it, she'll knock the Terrors for a goal!"

CHAPTER V

SANDY STARTS SOMETHING

"Fellows," said Sandy, when the Wildcats were gathered the next afternoon after practice at the East Side Ice Cream Palace, "you know what we ought to be doing for ourselves?"

"Now what you got up your sleeve?" asked Hoop, suspiciously.

"This is too big to get up my sleeve," rejoined Sandy, with a smile.

"Bet it's got something to do with the Terrors," guessed Sly.

"Only indirectly," answered Sandy, enjoying the speculation.

"Well—spill it!" demanded Dan. "We're not mind readers!"

Sandy's tongue was in his cheek. He regarded his Wildcat followers testily as they leaned toward him, frankly interested.

"The Terrors have already done this for *themselves,*" he said, slowly, "so it seems to

me we ought to be able to do it for *ourselves.* And that's to build a clubhouse."

"A clubhouse!" repeated the Wildcats in chorus.

"Yes, sir!" insisted Sandy, "a place where we could meet and have good times—a sort of headquarters. There's a swell spot on the Boardman River—Look Out Point—right across from the Terrors' den!"

Wildcats gazed at one another consultingly.

"But we've no money," protested Pink.

"And that's not all," reminded Hoop. "There's too much garbage and junk piled along the river bank. That Look Out Point's a sight! You can't get down there for broken bottles, old tin cans, dismantled automobiles and other truck!"

"What of it?" replied Sandy. "We'll clear a place on the Point and build a shack of boards and pieces of wood lying along the bank. . . ."

"Man, oh man! What a job!" groaned Sly. "Ex-cuse *me!*"

"Not much!" grinned the Wildcats' accepted leader. "You're going to supply one of the wheelbarrows and a pitchfork."

"Hey!" cried Dan, "you're not really in earnest, are you?"

Pink made a wry face. "If he is, I quit right now."

"Me, too!" seconded Dan.

But Sandy remained imperturbed against this mild insurrection.

"You'll come around to it," he predicted. "All of you—shoulders to the wheel! . . . That's the only way we're going to get things done in East Prescott."

"Say, listen!" broke in Hoop, "I guess there's a few things you don't know *yet*. Our side of town's controlled by West Prescott. The city council's been loaded against us for years. West Prescott's been getting all the improvements and their business men have been getting most of the business. Look at the west side of the river. Clean as a whistle, isn't it? . . . And look at our East Side! The city dump ground! . . . Why a few years ago both sides of the river were used for dumping trash. Then the folks on our side kicked about it and got out a petition but what chance did they have? Seven men on the city council and five of 'em favoring the West Side! We got it right

in the neck! The city council decided that there wasn't any sense dumping trash on both sides of the river—so it voted to dump all the trash on our side!"

Sandy sat for a moment musing, as Hoop finished.

"You see now what we're up against?" pointed Pink. "Our dads were Wildcats before us and they're still fighting it out with the dads of the Terrors we're bucking. Our side of town would really be better off if we separated from West Prescott entirely."

Sandy shook his head.

"Pulling apart won't help," he said, simply, "but pulling together will. There's been too many chips carried on shoulders around here for anyone's good. That's got to stop."

"Huh! Might as well try to stop Niagara Falls!" voiced Sly, skeptically.

"All right! But there's nothing to stop us building a clubhouse if we want to, is there?" persisted Sandy.

The query was met with silence.

"Our side the river has the chance of being twice as beautiful as the West Side," Sandy continued. "That neck of land that juts out

into the water—Look Out Point! Why, you can see half a mile up and down stream from there. We'd be well repaid for clearing it just to prove to folks what a place of beauty it could be!"

"Yeah—surrounded by junk!" razzed Dan.

"All the better!" rejoined Sandy. "Think of the contrast! . . . Besides, don't you guys see how that would worry the West Siders—us fellows taking an interest in cleaning up the river front? And the Terrors aren't going to like it much—our putting up a shack right across the river from them where we can spy on 'em with a pair of field glasses!"

The proposal of East Prescott's new resident now began to take on a rosier light. Fellow Wildcats could readily see how an encampment on Look Out Point would irritate the Terrors. In the first place, the West Siders had reveled in the fact that they possessed something which the Wildcats did not. And they would immediately resent any evidence of their going after the same thing. Especially would they rise up in opposition to the appearance of a clubhouse directly across the river—a shack

which would exist as an obvious challenge to them.

"We get you!" cried Sly, with sudden enthusiasm, "Sandy, that's a great idea!"

"Then you're going to be there with your wheelbarrow?" grinned the new Wildcat leader.

"With a steam shovel, if necessary!" volunteered Sly. "How about it, gang?"

"But won't the city council have something to say about us making use of Look Out Point?" asked Hoop, dubiously.

"We'll worry about that when it happens!" was Sandy's answer. "We've a couple hours before dark every night after baseball practice. In a couple weeks we could do a lot. You won't know the place!"

"When do we start?" queried Hoop.

"To-morrow night if you say so," was Sandy's rejoinder.

"To-morrow night it is!" announced the bunch.

Citizens of East Prescott passing along the road above the Boardman River on the fol-

lowing evening stopped to rub their eyes in undisguised amazement. What appeared to be a gang of workmen was busily engaged in clearing away the piles of débris on Look Out Point and carting the refuse to remote places along the bank.

"Hello!" exclaimed a passer-by, "what's the big idea? Why all the activity?"

"Haven't you heard?" guyed another. "They're clearing a site for a clothespin factory."

"Now aren't *you* funny?" was the biting retort as the first passer-by moved along.

But other passers-by came up to take the place of the casual lookers-on and these refused to budge until their curiosity was satisfied.

"What do you know?" gasped old Jake Kearns, as he puffed up the embankment to the road after having crawled down over the junk piles to investigate, "it ain't the city's doing this—it's our boys!"

"*What?*" The report came as a bombshell.

"They gone crazy?" asked someone incredulously.

"Pretty near," opined old Jake, who had

won the fat man's race three years in succession. "After darn near killin' myself getting down there to find out what's what, the boys just as good as tell me to mind my own business!"

"Then you don't know what they're up to?" laughed a bystander.

"If I did, young man, I'd a spit it out when I first got up here, 'stead of wastin' what breath I got left!" was old Jake's answer, as he flicked perspiration from the furrows in his forehead.

Terrors gathering in their clubhouse across the river following baseball practice were made aware of the new developments by their chieftain's loud outcry.

"What the heck's going on across there?" bellowed Slug Pickens, aiming a finger at the beehive of activity on Look Out Point. "Butch, gimme those glasses!"

Butch Simmons fearfully supplied his chief with the desired lenses. Slug gasped as he trained his glasses on the objective, uttering one explosive word.

"*Wildcats!*"

"Aw—you're seein' things!" was the first reaction of fellow Terrors.

There was a fight on for the glasses after that as astounded gang members sought to corroborate the Chief's vision for themselves!

"What the Sam Hill can they be doing?" was the query which immediately went up.

"Just now they're rustling junk!" observed Slug, dryly, "but it's a cinch they're not doing it for their health. They intend putting something on that point . . . but they'll never get away with it. Whatever it is—we'll stop 'em!"

"You said it!" agreed Fat Watson. "And when we do—just maybe those babies won't be down in the *dumps!*"

Maintaining an air of great secrecy and withstanding a large amount of kidding, Wildcats under the leadership of one Sandy Sanderson kept night after night at their strenuous labors of clearing Look Out Point. And presently the place commenced to take on a strikingly clean-cut appearance. Moreover, a pile of lumber of various odds and ends had begun to grow on the neck of land and finally fellow

Wildcats came on the job armed with hammers and saws in place of wheelbarrows and pitchforks.

"Oh ho!" cried an East Sider, standing on the highway above the steep embankment, "so that's what the boys are up to! . . . Building themselves a shack! . . . Well, more power to 'em! . . . Not a bad place for it, either—if they weren't fenced in by junk!"

Plans of the clubhouse called for one large room with windows looking directly across the river and up and down. The front of the clubhouse faced the stream and, from the steps leading down to the swirling river's edge, could be seen the shack which the Terrors dubbed their clubhouse. There was nothing pretentious about it and the start of the Wildcats' abode gave every evidence of the same crudity. But, if one were to judge by the spirit being shown in the erection of this simple structure, the Wildcats were building a mansion.

"What we've needed for a long time," was Hoop's comment, as he saw the foundation laid. "If we'd had this some years ago we might have had those Terrors eating our dust by this time!"

"Right!" agreed Sly. Then, as an afterthought, "Say, fellows—I've got a great name for our place!"

"What is it?" demanded Sandy.

"Shoot!" begged the others, "that's what we need—a good name!"

"I didn't say it was a good name," corrected Sly, "I said 'great'! There's a lot of difference."

"Well—spill it anyway!"

Sly cautiously removed himself to what he considered a safe distance.

"Something tells me you're not going to be so wild about this," he apologized, "so I'm taking no chances!"

Fellow Wildcats grinned.

"Come on!" they invited. "You'll suffer either way!"

"All right," decided Sly, keeping a wary eye on the crowd, "I think our clubhouse should be called—*Junk Villa!*"

For a moment the group stared at one another consultingly, then a laugh went the rounds.

"Pretty good!" commended Hoop.

"Come back—all is forgiven!" called Sandy.

"Junk Villa!" repeated Pink. "Boy, what a nom de plume! Well, anyhow—you know what I mean! . . ."

"Junk Villa it is!" shouted Dan. "What say, guys?"

There followed an enthusiastic, "Yea!"

And Sly Cooley returned to receive congratulatory pats on the back which caused him to cry for mercy.

"Hey! Let up, you guys! You couldn't sock me much harder if you were sore at me!"

Chief Wildcat Sandy gravely put a stop to the boisterous back-slapping.

"Spare him, Wildcats! . . . Remember—he's got to live to christen this shack by breaking a broken bottle against our stone chimney!"

Sly looked about him where piles of broken bottles glittered.

"Plenty of 'em to choose from," he observed. "Glad you said '*a* broken bottle.' If I had to break all these again I'd be at it for a year!"

"I've got it!" laughed Hoop. "At our dedication ceremony we'll deposit the bottle we break in naming our shack 'Junk Villa'—on one of these junk piles!"

"To be handed down to posterity!" breathed Dan. "How inspiring!"

"This is no kidding matter," warned Sandy. "We can have our jokes about it, of course—but the way the city's dumped garbage and junk along this river bank hands no laugh to me! That's why I think Sly's name 'Junk Villa' is so good. Every time we mention it folks will smile . . . but they're apt to be thinking something that isn't so funny!"

"He's a natural-born psychologist!" pointed out Hoop. "We won't be able to do anything any more but what Sandy'll be telling us it has some great, hidden significance!"

"Just the same," defended Pink, "if we could ever get the folks on our side of town steamed up! . . ."

"There's no way of telling what might happen," finished Dan. "So I say—hurray for mind over matter!"

"And while we're so satisfied with ourselves," reminded Hoop, "will you big heads kindly take a squint across the river and see what you see?"

Eyes were immediately focused on the op-

posite shore and a pair of binoculars was passed around.

"Huh!" snorted Pink, "they're wearing their eyeballs out looking at us."

"Good thing this river's so wide," remarked Sly, "or they'd be winging at us with their sling shots!"

"They've laid off us lately," said Hoop, soberly, "which usually means they're hatching something. It's a nice little lull before the storm!"

"And when the storm breaks . . ." started off Dan.

"Here's hoping we can get out from under the Terrors' *reign!*" punned Sly.

But this time the author of "Junk Villa" knew that he had said the wrong thing and he lost not a second in making himself scarce, scrambling over the heaps of junk to the highway above and waving a mocking hand at pursuing Wildcats as he sped on his way.

CHAPTER VI

A GOOD JOB DONE

First open evidence of the irritation caused the Terrors by the Wildcats' building activities was exhibited the following evening in baseball practice. Slug Pickens and his gang had apparently been waiting for the first comment on the clubhouse to come from an East Sider but the Wildcats had been most secretive while in contact with team members from across the river, giving the Terrors not so much as one chance to take a verbal crack at them.

But to-day, when Sandy, at third, had let two hard hit drives get through him, Chief Terror Slug Pickens could resist the temptation no longer.

"What's the matter, Butter Fingers?" he taunted. "Can't you pick anything up any more but *garbage?*"

It was a stinging remark and totally unexpected. Hoop, at second, overheard the rebuke and started toward Slug in a wave of feeling.

"You take that back!"

"What?" grinned Slug, belligerently, "the *garbage?*"

Fellow Terrors, sensing trouble, edged over, careful, however, lest they be "called" by Coach Potter who had warned them that East and West did not exist on the ball field. Slug and Hoop stood facing one another, each regarding the other hotly.

"Cut it, Hoop!" interceded Sandy. "I had something coming to me. Those balls I missed . . ."

"Yeah? Well, Slug doesn't field a thousand per cent himself! He's got no business riding you, Sandy!"

"Let it go, I say!" commanded Sandy, and Hoop, with reluctant obeisance, retreated gloweringly toward second.

The incident, however, had served as a revelation to the Wildcats of the Terrors' pent-up feelings and as a further admonition for them to be on their guard. Following practice Coach Potter herded the players together before letting them break for the clubhouse.

"Got something I want to tell you," he said, tersely.

And Terrors and Wildcats exchanged apprehensive glances.

"Now we're going to catch it!" Sly whispered to Pink.

"Better go slow on his bawling *us* out," said Slug to Slim. "It's the Wildcats that's to blame!"

But Coach Potter had no intentions of referring to the feud. This was immediately apparent the moment he spoke and his listeners wore expressions of agreeable surprise and relief.

"I've some real news for you," announced Coach Potter. "That open date on our schedule Saturday after next has been filled by Morton Tech."

"Morton Tech!" whistled team members, "Tri-State Champs! Oh, boy!"

"The Morton team's making a week's trip during spring vacation," the Coach continued, "and we were fortunate in booking them as another school cancelled. Needless to say, if we can take Morton over, it will establish us as one of the strongest high school teams in this part of the country . . . so, you see, we've

lined up something for you boys to shoot at!"

"*Shoot* is right!" agreed Captain Slug Pickens, nudging Slim. "You'll have to do some tall pitching against those babies!"

"You'll all have to do some *tall hustling!*" emphasized the Coach. "This Morton Tech game and the last one of the season against our old rival, Redfield, are our two toughest encounters. Be a great feather in our caps to come off with victories in both."

"We'll sure give 'em all we've got!" promised Slim, massaging his pitching arm.

"And then some!" added Slug, with a glance about at fellow Terrors.

"And *we'll* be in the game, too, don't forget," said Sandy, in a low tone, indicating Wildcat team members.

"Yes—and *how!*" rejoined Slug, likewise in a cautious undertone. "You just about blew the opening game . . . and in the ones since then. . . ."

"I'm still not satisfied with the way the infield is working," Coach Potter broke in.

"You *see?*" muttered Slug, with a nod toward Sandy.

"So you infielders are going to get a stiffer workout from now on," the Coach declared. "There's been too many bobbles in every game. You fellows seem to be good enough individually but you don't seem to work smoothly together. Anybody know the answer?"

Faces flushed and eyes looked toward the ground but all—Wildcats and Terrors alike—shook their heads, "No." Coach Potter stood studying his squad for a moment, then dismissed them with a, "That's all for to-day," and the bunch made a wild dash for the field house.

In the locker room feverish tongues were unloosed.

"Did we know the answer?" sang Slug Pickens. "You tell the world! . . . And don't think Coach doesn't know it, too. He was just trying to get us fussed. He knows darn well there's two birds in that infield who ought to be warming the bench."

"And those two are Phil Stone and Slug Pickens!" shouted a Wildcat voice from the other side of the lockers.

"That's right," spoke another voice, "those are the weak spots—first and short!"

Slug, one shoe and sock off, made a dive in the direction of the voices.

"Who said that?" he demanded, glaring at a group of Wildcats in various states of dressing.

"Three guesses!" teased Pink.

"Smart guys, eh?" was Slug's retort. "Well, I'll find out . . . and when I do! . . ."

"It'll be years from now," finished Hoop.

"The *garbage* gang!" taunted Slug, "that's what you are! . . . Some clubhouse you're building! Looks worse than a junk heap!"

"Thank you!" replied Sandy, sweetly. "Won't you visit Junk Villa some time? . . . Drop in for tea!"

"BAH!" raged the Chief Terror and stepped back upon a pebble with his bare foot. "Ow! . . ." he exclaimed, involuntarily, lifting the injured member from the floor.

"Well, did the 'ittle boy hurt his tootsie wootsie?" roasted Sly.

At this the captain of Prescott High's baseball team all but went up through the ceiling. There was no satisfaction to be gained this side the lockers so he hopped painfuly back to the sympthy of his own West Siders.

"Those guys are getting entirely too fresh," he told his Terrors. "They've got to be sat on again!"

Saturday's game with Upland went to Prescott by the one-sided score of 15 to 8. Slim Becker simply breezed along on the pitching mound, saving himself for the coming clash with Morton Tech, while his team mates pounded the ball to all corners of the lot. Their fielding, however, was still ragged, every member of the infield appearing too anxious. This anxiety was expressed in terms of injured feelings for it was noticeable that heated comments were exchanged by the infielders in blaming each other for certain misplays.

"A great team in the making," observed a fan, "but it's got to come along fast this next week to stand a chance against Morton Tech. One infield slip like several to-day would easily sink us."

Prescott team members did not need to be told this. They knew full well that they were not functioning properly, that antagonism between Wildcats and Terrors was eating at the vitals of team play.

"And Captain Slug Pickens is the worst offender!" was the consensus of opinion.

"Listen, Cap!" said Slim, on the Wednesday night following when only one more day of hard practice remained before the big battle. "We Terrors are all with you as far as the Wildcats are concerned but there's no sense in us giving them the razz on the ball field. We're not getting anywhere by it and we're only defeating ourselves!"

"Who says so?"

"We say so!"

"Well, what about the razzing they've handed us?"

"Sure—but that's only because we started it first."

"I can't see it."

"You can't? . . . Say, that Sandy's got you eating out of his hand!"

"What do you mean?" All of Slug Pickens' belligerency flared up at this. The fellow who had taken over his old third base job was now the admitted thorn in his side . . . in the whole *West* Side, for that matter!

"I mean," explained Slim, "that I think Sandy blows you up on purpose just because

he knows he can. I'll bet dollars to doughnuts he even makes errors deliberately every once and awhile . . . in order to get your goat!"

Slug stared, open-mouthed.

"Naw," he answered, undecided, "he wouldn't do that! . . . Well, why not? . . . If I knew he really did!"

"Pipe down!" cautioned Phil. "Whether he did or not, you're letting him make a fish out of you the way it is."

"That's straight!" seconded Rudie, as Slug studied his fellow Terrors doubtfully, "and we're putting you wise! These Wildcats are fighting us differently than they used to. They're putting up a battle of wits!"

Slug winced.

"We can lick the bunch of 'em any time we want to!"

"Yeah . . . but not the way they're bucking us now!" voiced Slim, "They're too wise to risk another battle . . . instead, they're rubbing it in every chance they get . . . and we're giving 'em plenty of chances!"

But Chief Slug Pickens was not yet ready to admit that his fellow Terrors were right.

Working until dark on their rapidly rising clubhouse, Wildcats under Sandy's inspiring leadership, left their labors with the assurance that another night's work would complete the structure.

"Of course we'll want to paint it and fix it up generally," said Sandy, as he stood back and surveyed the shack in the gathering dusk, "but it's certainly going to be a great place for us!"

"Bet those Terrors are dying to look it over," grinned Pink, "The cracks Slug made about it the other day shows it's on their minds!"

"You said it," nodded Hoop. "Well, as far as I'm concerned, those Terrors are never going to get more than a long-range look at this clubhouse!"

"Right!" agreed Sandy. "This is forbidden territory to them and any Terror caught on our premises is going to be mighty sorry!"

"Spoken like a chief!" commended Sly.

The other fellows nodded agreement.

And a tired but joyous troop of Wildcats wended their way over mounds of trash, homeward bound.

A tingle of excitement was in the veins of each Prescott team member as he reported for the last stiff practice prior to the important clash with the champion Morton Tech nine. Thus far this season Prescott's full strength had not been tested. Good pitching and heavy hitting had overcome all opposition as well as atoning for certain fielding weaknesses. Saturday, however, Prescott would be face to face with good pitching and heavy hitting and the fate of the game might readily hang upon a team's fielding ability in a crisis.

"Coach will sure put our infield through a knot hole to-day," predicted Sandy to Hoop. "Hope Slug knocks the chips off his shoulders and teams with us. He's a whiz at short when he wants to be."

"But he's been trying all season to make us out lemons," said Hoop. "And the more he's failed, the more determined he's got."

"Well, anyhow," replied Sandy, concernedly, "we'll hope for the best."

But any hopes that certain Wildcats may have entertained for the existence of a truce until after the Morton Tech game were rudely dashed during batting practice. Coach Potter

had not as yet put in his appearance, having been detained by Corky Hayden, Prescott's business manager, with regard to special game arrangements. Left to themselves the squad had started its customary routine drill and Dan Overman, volunteering to pitch 'em up to the batters, had gone out on the mound. A line of batters had quickly formed, Slug being slow to respond and finally pushing himself in just ahead of Sandy. Nothing was said or done until Slug's apparent turn at bat came when Sandy immediately followed him to the plate and took his station on the left side opposite the surprised Slug who had entered the batter's box on the right.

"Sorry, Slug," said Sandy, quietly, "but you jumped the line. It's my turn at bat!"

"*Your* turn? How do you get that way?" Slug's eyes blazed.

Wildcats and Terrors looked at one another askance. Their rival chiefs were about to strike fire again.

"You're out of turn, Slug!" called Slim, seeking to break up the impending clash. "Get away from the plate and let Sandy . . ."

"Shoot that ball!" commanded Slug, disre-

garding Slim's plea and looking toward Dan Overman, on the mound.

"Sandy's right," counseled Dan, "you crowded in. It's his bat!"

"Pitch that ball!" Slug repeated, and slashed his bat at Sandy who was standing his ground across the plate. The tip of his bat grazed Sandy's fingers, bruising the knuckles.

Quick as a flash the new resident of East Prescott retaliated. He stepped in close, making a club of his bat, and belabored his antagonist lightly across the small of his back. Slug, pained and enraged, drew back his own bat and made a savage rush toward Sandy who retreated, fencing off the blows with his bat . . . and grinning. He had not struck Slug hard enough to do more than sting him—but Slug was now out to do violent harm. Fellow team mates, Wildcats and Terrors alike, rushed in, clutching at Slug's arms and bat, but were forced to bear him to the ground before they could wrest the stick from his grasp.

Sandy, dusting himself off, resumed his place at the plate as quietly as though nothing had happened.

"All right, Dan" he called, "let's see that ball!"

The fellow in the pitcher's box raised his arm to throw, then held it as his eyes strayed to the side. Sandy had turned his back on the efforts of team mates to subdue the furious Slug who had now struggled to his feet.

"I'll show that guy he can't put one over on me!" Slug cried, and, the moment released, made a second dive for the plate and—Sandy.

"Look out!" yelled Dan from the pitching mound, dropping his arm to his side.

Sandy crouched instinctively and leaped to the side as Slug lunged through the air with intentions of landing on his back. The sudden leap, however, carried Sandy just out of his reach and a further infuriated Slug struck the third base line near home plate, smearing his right shoulder and knee with white lime.

"Snap out of it, Slug!" demanded Slim. "What diff does a turn at bat make? . . . Lay off Sandy!"

But Slug was up on his feet, unheeding, and charging at his East Side rival who, now prepared for attack, had tossed aside his bat.

"Let 'em have it out and get it over with," counseled Pink, holding several would-be interferers off.

As Slug came in, swinging his fists, Sandy stepped forward to meet him and, instead of countering with blows, grasped Slug's right wrist and stepped quickly past him, forcing the wrist behind Slug's back and bringing Slug instantly to his knees.

"Leggo my arm!" cried the Chief Terror, wincing. "Fight fair, you! . . . Have to trick a fellow!"

"Hold your horses!" said the fellow who had been chosen over him for third base, "I'm not sore at you and I'm not going to fight you. Get me? . . . But I'm not going to let you walk over me, either!"

"Hey!" called Fat Watson, one of Slug's cohorts, "let Slug up. You're liable to break his arm!"

"Don't pull at me then!" warned Sandy, "I know what I'm doing . . . and I've got a few things I've been aiming to tell Slug for some time."

The Wildcat leader tightened his grip as Slug made a sudden effort to squirm away.

"Trouble with you," said Sandy in his ear, "You've never been willing to live and let live. Now, are you going to cut this stuff out, or I'll . . ."

"Cheese it, fellows! Here comes the Coach!" cried Fat.

Almost before thinking, Sandy released his grip and looked about. Slug sprang at once to his feet, clasping his arm. But the fight had been taken out of him. Though he had gained his freedom through the ruse of a fellow Terror, he showed no desire to resume the conflict. Instead he attempted to retaliate with a torrent of words.

"Maim a guy's throwing arm, why don't you?" he fired, "Read *me* the riot act! . . . Won't fight, eh? . . . We'll see what you will and won't do! . . . Think you've shown me up, don't you? . . . Well, wait till Saturday's game and we'll see who's who!"

Sandy smiled.

"Suits me perfect!" he agreed, and turned once more toward the plate, calling at the same time to Dan, "all right, Dan—how about tossing me a couple?"

Slug Pickens, looking on, scowled as he

turned to his followers with the low-voiced comment, "I'll get him for this!"

"Good boy, Sandy!" congratulated Pink, approaching the plate, "That's the first time I ever saw anybody make the mighty Slug back down!"

Coach Potter now actually put in his appearance.

"Stiff work out to-day, gang!" he announced. "This Morton Tech's going to take all we've got and more . . . which calls for tiptop teamwork . . ."

"Teamwork!" muttered the aggrieved Slug, eyes resting bitterly on Sandy, "With that goof in the infield? I'll bet—if we lose—we lose through him!"

"Better look out for Slug Saturday," advised Hoop, when practice was over and the Wildcats were by themselves in one corner of the dressing room. "He's so sore he's apt to pull anything to get even with you in the game."

Sandy shook his head.

"Not much afraid of his doing that. This game means too much. He may try to get even other ways but he wouldn't risk our losing!"

"Don't think he wouldn't!" cautioned Sly. "Can't tell what he'll do once he gets started. He's a great ball player when he's got his head but once he gets sore . . ."

"Then I'd better be careful not to rile him up," decided Sandy, "because I don't mind admitting we're going to need him . . . at his best!"

"You're altogether too fair with him anyhow," reproved Sly, "when he's trying every way to make you look bad!"

"And the rest of us East Siders!" added Hoop, "Look how they rubbed it in—the errors we made opening game! And yet if it hadn't been for your great catch that game . . ."

"Forget it!" laughed the newcomer to East Prescott, "we don't need to be always looking for credit. We know when we've played the game as it should be played—and that's all that matters . . ."

Hoop's face colored. Other Wildcat team members looked sheepish.

"Sandy's right—as usual!" agreed Pink. "Those Terrors would just like to get us up in the air. All we've got to do is watch our steps and let them trip over their own!"

Completion of the Wildcat clubhouse so aptly christened "Junk Villa" was accomplished late that evening, the laborers under Chief Sandy's direction sticking on the job by lantern light until the last nail was driven. The honor of driving the last nail was bestowed upon Sandy in recognition of his having originated the clubhouse idea.

"You've made us what we are to-day!" sang Sly Cooley.

"And also this noble shack!" added Hoop, "so to you, oh mighty Chief, falls the glorious right of driving home the final nail. Here's the hammer—and make sure you smack ye nail square on the head or we're in for bad luck!"

Sandy grinningly accepted the hammer as fellow Wildcats gathered about him, holding lanterns high.

"The solemnity of this occasion is oppressive!" breathed Pink.

"Get out!" rebuked Dan, "It's the smell of these darn lanterns. Open that window, somebody!"

"Can't," answered Sly, "it's jammed. Dan didn't hang her right!"

"He didn't, eh? Better report him to the

carpenter's union. He's supposed to know his stuff."

"I did the best I could with poor material," defended Dan.

"Why, I pulled the sash out of a junk pile myself!" retorted Pink, "and it passed Hoop's inspection as in A-1 condition!"

"You're full of blue prints!" was Dan's rejoinder, "and Hoop couldn't inspect . . ." Pink started for him. "Oh, no—I take it all back!"

"Let the nail driving ceremony go on!" called Sly, "I'm tired enough, right now, to hit a mattress."

Sandy took up the nail, gazing at it fondly.

"Fellows," he said, "I hate to finish a job we've had so much fun on. The building of this shack is going to mean much to us. As time goes on we can make this Look Out Point a place of beauty . . . a place to be proud of. When we've had a chance to pull all the weeds and clean every inch of the ground and paint our clubhouse . . . well, we'll just about make the whole town sit up and take notice . . . East Prescott anyway! . . . As it is we've already got a mighty cozy hang-out that can be

open day or night for members of our gang. I've only one key to the door now but I'm having enough made so each of us can carry one."

"Good idea!"

"Great!"

Sandy pressed the nail point against a piece of siding and drew back his hammer.

"And with the driving of this nail," he said, impressively, "let's feel we are building more than a clubhouse—a gang that plays square . . . that stands up for what it knows to be right regardless of what happens. The way the Terrors are acting now they're just a bunch of rowdies. They're so used to running the town that it's gone to their heads and they're jealous of anyone but themselves doing anything. Some of the Terrors would like to be decent . . . you can tell that . . . but as long as Slug Pickens feels as he does . . . as long as he rules the roost . . . you can bet that they're not going to change much. You can see, though, how our new way of fighting is hurting 'em. They're burning up inside and yet we're giving 'em few excuses to take it out on us. We're beginning to make 'em feel fool-

ish. They've had an idea we couldn't do anything or have anything unless they said the word. But the way we've gone ahead and put up this clubhouse and seemed to be having a good time without paying any attention to them, has got them guessing. And one of these days we're going to have them coming to us and asking for favors."

A great cheer went up as Sandy's hammer flashed but the cheer changed to cries of dismay as the hammer struck the nail a glancing blow and sent it spinning into the darkness beyond the light cast by the lanterns.

"Oh, my jiminy!" groaned Hoop, supplying another nail, "there's that bad luck I was warning you about!"

"Who believes in superstition these days?" reprimanded Sandy, nevertheless embarrassed by his failure to strike the nail on the head, "Well, fellows—here goes!"

And this time hammer and nail connected squarely so that three well-directed blows sunk the nail into the board.

"Hooray for Junk Villa!" shouted Sly, "even if I did think of the name!"

"Hooray for Sandy!" cried fellow Wildcats.

And, noisily jubilant, the band of East Siders watched their Chief Wildcat close the door of their new clubhouse and lock it, then grabbed him up and carried him protestingly over mounds of junk, up a precipitous embankment to the highway where they set him down and paraded along the street with him, swinging their lanterns and telling the world in song that they'd been working on their clubhouse, "all the live long day."

CHAPTER VII

DIRTY WORK

"Come on, gang! There's nobody around!"

The rays of a pocket flash light played over a building newly completed near the gurgle and rush of river water. The time was close to midnight and the group of figures gathered in the almost pitch blackness were strange to their surroundings.

"Don't think we'll have enough light to do this," said one, uneasily.

"Watch those rowboats," cautioned another, "better pull them farther on the bank. I'd hate to have to go way down and around by the bridge!"

"What'll we do first?" asked a third.

"Wreck the place!" came the order from one who was obviously the recognized leader. "Make 'em think a cyclone's struck it!"

"Aw, say—I thought we were just going to litter it up with junk!"

"Yeah! What's the good of wrecking it?"

"They'd wreck ours if they dared, wouldn't they?"

A muttered protest went up. Certain ones in the band of marauders were evidently not so sure. Their leader, however, shook the door of the rudely constructed building and then put his shoulder against it. The door gave way with a splintering crash.

"Pretty nifty, eh?" grinned the leader as he pointed his flash light about the room, "Well, wait till we get through with our interior decorating!"

Advancing into the room he dashed out each window with his foot, the glass and frames falling with a dismal jingle.

"All right!" he called to the group of onlookers, "throw in the junk! . . . Soak it through the windows . . . against the walls . . . anywhere! Pile it in thick! Shove the bigger pieces through the door! . . . They call this 'Junk Villa,' do they? . . . Well, we'll help it live up to its name!"

Caught in a wave of destructiveness, the apprehensive feelings of the gang gradually vanished and soon all were entered into the work of desecration with vicious enthusiasm. It then

became a matter of conjecture as to who could think up the wildest stunt to pull on the unsuspecting owners of the property they were attacking.

"This old buggy would look great on the roof!" proposed one, and a scheme was devised to lift it there.

Every conceivable type of thing to be found in a city dump heap was packed and jammed into the building and other ungainly objects strewn about the grounds until a flash light survey of the premises revealed the most abject of ruins.

"There! I guess this will hold 'em for a while!" decided the leader, with great evident satisfaction. "Too bad some of our gang didn't have nerve enough to come. When they find out what a job we've done they'll probably try to take part credit for it, though!"

"You bet!" voiced another, "These Wildcats won't be so wild after this."

"They may be wilder for a while," laughed still another, "but what good will it do 'em? And besides, they can't really prove who did the job!"

"No, but they'll have mighty good suspi-

cions!" rejoined the leader. "The thing for us to do, though, is to pull the innocence gag! We don't know anything about this—see? . . . And it makes us sore to have them even think we'd do it!"

"That's the idea!" commended a grinning confederate. "Boy, for a look at their faces when they get a squint at this!"

"Well, maybe we can spot 'em from across the river!"

"Careful about that! If they'd catch us watching . . ."

Stealthily the figures crept away from their scene of devastation to rowboats at the river's edge. Into these they climbed with the caution born of experience, masking their lanterns as they seated themselves. Certain delegated ones laid hands on the oars and the boats were pushed out into the blackened waters which now, as they swirled and sucked about the crafts, seemed to whisper hoarsely, "D-i-r-t-y w-o-r-k . . . d-i-r-t-y w-o-r-k! . . ." But whatever the inner feelings of the participants on leaving the east side of the sober old Boardman, the "deed" was done! And a staggering blow had been struck under cover of

darkness, at an intended stronghold of the enemy.

Friday, day before the clash with Morton Tech, Tri-State Champs, Coach Potter had ordered a light work out . . . a little batting practice and a touching up of Prescott's one obvious weakness—her fielding. In the Field House making ready for the diamond, the Terrors watched the Wildcats warily.

"They don't know yet," Slug Pickens decided, on detecting no visible signs of agitation. "Probably haven't had a chance to go down there to-day . . . but to-night . . .!"

On the ball field, with Coach Potter very much on the job, practice was run through without untoward incident. The only slight break in an otherwise mechanical performance was a bad peg to first by Slug at short who, when he caught Sandy grinning at him from third, hotly retorted: "You're the cause of that! My arm you hurt yesterday!"

Sandy had shaken his head at this, waving his gloved hand at Slug in mock derision.

Following the work out, Coach Potter told his team it was in excellent form and rated a

good chance against Morton Tech on the morrow even though this traveling nine had been battering its opposition all week.

"Just play 'heads up' baseball, don't hurry your play in that infield, and make their pitcher give you good balls to swing at," he counseled, "This Morton Tech bunch may be veterans but they'll have a time beating a team on its toes."

As soon as fellow Wildcats could crawl out of uniforms and back into civilian clothes they left the Field House on the dog trot, bound for the river.

"Here's a key for each one of you," offered Sandy, passing them out, "in exchange for which I'll accept twenty-five cents!"

"Take mine back!" refused Pink, playfully, "I'll go in through the window."

"Boy, it'll seem good to visit Junk View!" coined Sly, "without taking a hammer and saw along. Just to bask in the gentle breeze, sitting out on the steps of Junk Villa and watching the sun set behind the cheesy clubhouse of the Terrors! What bliss! . . . What ecstasy to enjoy the . . ."

"What apple sauce!" broke in Hoop, laughing at his friend's joking words.

"No kidding, it does seem great to have our work done," declared Dan, "all except the finishing touches which won't amount to much. That Look Out Point really looks like something now!"

Turning off onto the highway above the river, the bunch could now secure a bird's-eye view of the city dump grounds stretching along the bank for blocks.

"You see how swell our clubhouse . . ." started Sandy, and stopped.

Fellow Wildcats came to an abrupt halt and stared unbelievingly, rubbing their eyes. Something was decidedly wrong. Either they were the victims of a peculiar mirage or Look Out Point had suffered a junk landslide. The little neck of land presented a frightful sight from the road, literally buried in the messiest sort of trash. Cries of rage escaped the lips of the Wildcats as they looked and all, as if by one breath, exclaimed in contempt, *"Terrors!"*

Then each Wildcat concerned himself only with the speed with which he could safely de-

scend the embankment, half-running, half-sliding, taking care that jagged bottles and sharp edges of tin did not slice through shoe leather, or that footing was not lost amid débris. And when all had reached the neck of land known as Look Out Point and were able to examine at close range the wreckage wrought, feelings of anguish and rage mounted by the minute.

"As mean a stunt as was ever pulled!" denounced Hoop.

"They can't ever call us 'hit and run babies' again," said Sly. "Our pushing them in the pool wasn't anything compared to this. They're 'hit and run babies' themselves. Afraid to attack when we're around!"

"Look at that buggy up on top of the house!" moaned Dan, dejectedly. "How the deuce they ever got it there . . ."

"And that old stove jammed into that window," groaned Sly. "The clubhouse is ruined!"

"The way they've strung stuff all over the Point," ranted Pink. "Take us days to clean up."

"Boy, we'll fire their clubhouse for this!" proposed Hoop, indignantly.

"What's the matter, Sandy?" demanded Sly, "why don't you say something? Isn't this the worst mess you ever saw? How the dickens can we get even?"

Chief Wildcat Sandy Sanderson, while fellow Wildcats had been loudly airing their feelings, had been quietly making a round of inspection and he now came back to the group, greeting his questioner with a slow smile.

"I'm not thinking so much of getting even right now," he rejoined. "What I'm figuring on is making repairs."

"Yes, but . . . but . . ." fumed Sly.

"One thing at a time," cautioned Sandy, "and the most important thing first. Are we going to let the Terrors see that we're downed by what they've done to us? Not by a jug full! . . . We're going to start right to-night clearing this mess up."

"Just for them to wreck again?" retorted Dan, gloomily.

Sandy shook his head. "They'll never wreck it again," he said, confidently. "We've got to keep cool heads about this. What's been done has been done. All our crying won't help any. And I, for one, don't intend to give those

Terrors the satisfaction of knowing how hard this has hit us!"

"What do you mean?" gasped Sly. "Not let them know how we feel about . . ."

"Exactly!" answered Sandy. "They'll naturally be expecting us to hit the clouds the next time we meet 'em . . . and it'll hurt 'em worse if we can act just as though nothing's happened . . ."

"Huh!" grunted Dan, "don't know as I could do that. Very sight of those birds now would be enough to touch me off like a firecracker!"

"But you've got to get over that," insisted the fellow who had not lived long in East Prescott. "Can't you see the Terrors won't get any fun out of doing this to us if they don't even get a rise out of us on it?"

Fellow Wildcats looked glumly at one another, then faces commenced to brighten with understanding.

"Might be something in that at that!" Sly was ready to agree.

"Worth trying, anyhow," condescended Hoop.

"But it's going to be a tough thing to do," considered Dan. "Let on to them like noth-

ing's happened! . . . Whoopie! . . . Here's hoping I can stick right close to little old Self-Control. Otherwise Mister Slug Pickens is going to get busted smack on the nose!"

Sandy grinned. "Take it out on 'em all you want behind their backs," he counseled, "but don't let 'em catch you blinking an eye when you're around 'em. After all, we'll live through this. We cleaned the place up once. We can do it again."

Coats came off with a will and fellow Wildcats, putting themselves again under the direction of Chief Sandy, set to work as a small beginning toward righting the damage done.

This action, could the East Siders have only known it, brought forth amazed expressions from watchers across the river, one Slug Pickens characterizing these expressions by the exasperated exclamation: "Well, I'll be jiggered! Don't those guys know when they're licked?"

CHAPTER VIII

SLUG HURTS HIMSELF

Close-mouthed Wildcats reported at the Field House at one-thirty Saturday afternoon to dress for one of the biggest games on the Prescott High schedule. There was a tensity about their attitude which the casual observer might have ascribed to natural nervousness before taking the diamond to face a foe. But the truth of the matter was, each Wildcat was fighting to hold his feelings in leash in the presence of apprehensive Terrors who expected to be pounced upon, vocally and physically, for the part they felt they would be charged with playing in the wanton destruction and desecration of the East Sider's new clubhouse—by name, if you please—Junk Villa!

But, as the minutes went by and nothing happened, fellow Terrors commenced stealing wondering glances at one another. What was up here? This was funny! The Wildcats should be blowing up all over the place. It

would be a perfectly human and justifiable thing to do under the circumstances but somehow the Wildcats weren't doing it—somehow they were managing to conduct themselves as of old, maintaining an indifferent aloofness, exchanging banter among themselves with scarcely a glance in the Terrors' direction.

"I can't figure it, can you?" said Slug, finally, registering frank disappointment.

Fellow Terrors shook their heads, deeply puzzled.

"You'd think they'd certainly suspect us," speculated Fat, "and that would be enough for them to want to 'lay us out!' "

"But they've never made a crack to us about their clubhouse," recalled Phil. "That's kind of funny, too, when you think of it."

"Maybe they're not opening their heads about it till after the game," suggested Slim Becker, rubbing his pitching arm. "If that's their plan, you gotta give 'em credit. I said from the start it was a dumb thing for you fellows to do, right before the big game. That's one reason I wouldn't join you."

"Yeah, you were afraid we'd get caught!" charged Slug.

Slim gave a disparaging little laugh. "Now, Slug, you know me better than that! I just think you guys have gone off your nuts lately . . . pulling things you'll be sorry for one of these days."

The Chief Terror glowered.

"Any time we're sorry for what we do to them!" he answered, sullenly, "they've done plenty to us!"

"For instance?" Slim demanded, reaching for his glove.

"Well . . ." hesitated Slug, "I . . . er . . . guess it's the things they *haven't* done that's been worse!"

"You see?" pointed out Slim, "it's just as I tried to tell you before. Those Wildcats are fighting us different and it's hurting us worse!"

Prescott's team captain banged a shoe exasperatedly against a locker on the pretense of knocking some dirt from the cleats.

"You make me sick!" he muttered in reply.

"You make me *sicker!*" Slim grinned, and ambled out of the dressing room.

A pretty kettle of fish! Dissension among the Terrors! Disappointment and dissension. Their one prize achievement against the Wild-

cats—a supposedly crushing attack—made so light of as to be given no outward recognition! Beyond that, a difference of opinion between certain Terrors as to whether the attack had been warranted. Open suggestions by some that this had been carrying a good thing too far! Murmurs against the iron-handed rule which Slug had always exercised over his West Siders. And Slim, a leading Terror and Prescott's star pitcher, walking off from his Chief and team captain after handing him a sharp reprimand! What, indeed, were things coming to? His authority had never been questioned before!

"Snap it up, you fellows!" ordered Coach Potter, coming in. "We ought to be taking the diamond!"

Team members hastened to complete their dressing, conscious now of an excited hubbub outside. The Morton Tech nine had just completed a flashy practice session, having been out on the field early to work the "train kinks" out of their muscles, according to the explanation of their coach.

"Great stuff, guys!" complimented Sandy, referring to the silence maintained by fellow

Wildcats on the clubhouse matter. "Those Terrors don't know what to think. They're in a daze. And if we can only play bang-up baseball to-day . . ."

"Just watch us!" rejoined Hoop, resolutely. "If we're beaten by Tech it won't be a Wildcat's fault!"

A capacity crowd filled the park to witness the contest. Morton Tech's fame was, of course, the main drawing card. But interest was also strong in Prescott High which Clint Evers, school reporter, had declared in print to be "the best in years."

"I suppose, just because I brag up the team's prospects," Clint had said, somewhat apologetically, "the boys won't come through in their big games. But even Coach Potter admits, if the fellows play the baseball they're capable of, they can give any high school nine a battle royal!"

Well aware of the existing feud, Coach Potter believed in a "hands-off" policy, concerning himself in the strife only when it appeared to be interfering with team play. In his observation it actually seemed as though the rivalry

had served to put all team members more on their toes and, so long as it served this purpose, Coach Potter preferred to withhold censure, and let Terrors and Wildcats settle their own differences off the field.

Bugs Maxwell, Morton Tech's star twirler, was announced as the pitching selection for the visitors which presented advance evidence of the respect in which Prescott was held. Coming to Prescott with an unbroken string of victories gained on the road trip, the Morton Tech nine was taking no chances. They had heard reports of Slim Becker's hurling ability and determined to match his performance in the box with their pitching ace.

"Looks like an old-fashioned pitchers' battle," commented a white-haired fan. "Something you don't see so often these days—with all this free hitting!"

His prediction proved correct. Both pitchers found themselves to be in top form as was borne out by the failure of the batters of either side to connect consistently for safeties. And the game went along until the last of the seventh with neither side having been able to put across

a run. Moreover, so well-nigh flawless had been the brand of pitching offered that few hard chances had been given the fielders.

"Marvelous pitching!" exclaimed a home town rooter, "but this can't last forever. One side or the other's bound to break through. Come on, Prescott! Start something! Lucky seventh, you know!"

"One run could win this!" encouraged Coach Potter as the Prescott team members came in for their bats. "Slim's got the edge on Bugs —and he's going through for a shut-out. Get that run this inning, gang—and clinch the game!"

Wildcats and Terrors, playing side by side in the field, had left nothing to be desired, each faction obviously determined not to make the first error. Scarcely a word had been spoken between the two groups, every fellow paying strict attention to business. Prescott's playing attitude was in striking contrast to Morton Tech's whose players indulged in peppy backslappings and noisy shoutings of encouragement.

"Rah! Rah! boys!" kidded a Prescott supporter.

"You bet and we've got a team to rah! rah! about!" retorted a Morton Tech fan.

Phil Stone, Prescott's first baseman, was first at bat.

"This Bugs has made a simp of me so far," he said, grimly, "but I'll be durned if he's going to throw 'em past me this time"

And Phil met Bugs Maxwell's first pitch for a sizzling single to right. The hit brought an exultant cheer from Terror throats. Tom Perry, center fielder and another Terror, was up next. After him, batting in clean-up position—heaviest hitter on the team—Captain Slug Pickens!

"It won't be long now!" sang Terror Rudie, left fielder, with a glance about him at Wildcat team members, "Here's where *we* put the old game on ice!"

But Tom Perry, trying to sacrifice Phil down to second according to Coach's instructions, bunted a foul fly which the Morton Tech catcher gathered in after a short run.

One down and a man on first.

Wildcat team members groaned. Terrors looked on glumly.

"That's pitching!" the Morton Tech back-

stop called to Bugs. "They'll never get more than a hit an inning off you, big boy!"

Bugs Maxwell grinned and nodded. He felt the first batter had hit one that was a slip on his part. He'd meant to keep the ball on the outside and he'd make it a bit too good. He'd take care not to pull a tactical mistake again. This Slug Pickens, for instance. He'd struck out Prescott's supposed heaviest hitter twice on balls so close in that when the batter swung he missed them around the handle. It was plain to see that the Prescott captain was anxious to knock the ball out of the lot . . . and a batter in that frame of mind was the easiest to deceive.

"Come on, Slug!" appealed the home fans. "Get hold of one!"

Chief Wildcat Sandy, next at bat, had trailed Slug to the plate.

"Now's your chance!" he called. "Let's see what a Terror can do in a pinch!"

Slug glared as he stepped into the batter's box. This pitcher Maxwell had made a monkey of him all the game long. He'd just about paralyzed all the Prescott batsmen, but of the five

hits gleaned off his delivery, the much despised leader of the Wildcats had two of them.

"You wait!" Slug promised, swinging his bat viciously.

"Move back your fielders!" shouted a Prescott rooter.

Morton Tech players grinned.

"What for?" called one fellow. "To catch a strike out?"

Slug's face went crimson. He swung at the first ball, an obviously bad one, the force of his swing turning him half around.

"Here it is!" kidded the Morton Tech catcher, holding up the horsehide for Slug's chagrined scrutiny.

"Look 'em over!" warned Sandy. "Make 'em be good! That was a mile wide!"

Slug looked the next one over, scowling at the ball as it whizzed past and then kicked up a great cloud of dust as he heard the umpire bark: "Striker tuh!"

Bugs Maxwell had slipped one over on him!

With two strikes and no balls it was logical that Morton Tech's pitching ace would waste a couple. But, too late, Slug saw to his amaze-

ment that Bugs had grooved a blinding speeder. He swung, barely ticking the ball, and heard it thud in the catcher's mitt behind him.

"Yer out!" bellowed the umps.

And the captain of Prescott High's baseball team threw his bat from him in disgust and humiliation.

"His third straight strike out!" said someone, disconsolately. "Boy, that Morton Tech pitcher sure has his number!"

"Tough luck!" called Sandy as the Chief Terror passed him on the way to the bench.

"Let's see you do any better!" cried the disgruntled Slug.

Sandy made no answer, stooping down to dust off his hands that he might grip his bat the tighter. Over on first Terror Phil Stone squatted, making a megaphone of his hands.

"Bring me in, Sandy!" he entreated. "Give the old pill a ride!"

"Yeah, show 'em what a Wildcat can do!" shouted an East Side enthusiast.

"Two men out!" reminded the Morton Tech catcher as Bugs Maxwell prepared to pitch. "Here's easy victim number three!"

A groan went the rounds as Sandy swung at

the first ball and missed. Bugs was wasting few balls, crossing up the batters by cutting the corners.

"Sandy's a goner, too!" predicted a voice, gloomily.

Crack! The prognosticator was almost made to swallow his own words so quickly did the hit follow upon their utterance. And simultaneous with the meeting of ball and bat, Prescott rooters came up on their feet with shouts of joy, their eyes straining after a speeding white sphere which shot on a line between first and second and struck between racing fielders to bound smartly up against the right field fence.

"It's a three bagger!" screamed someone as Sandy rounded second.

"A run's in!" shouted another, as Terror Phil Stone streaked across the home plate with the first run of the game.

"Slide!" begged the crowd.

And Chief Wildcat Sandy, hitting the dirt, slid into third amid a cloud of dust, just beating the ball to the bag.

"Wow! Longest hit of the game!" shrieked Sly, reaching over to thump Slug Pickens on

the knee. "How's that, Cap, for *producing?*"

"Great!" exclaimed Slug, in the excitement of the moment.

"Come on now! Bring your brother Wild cat in!" cried the crowd as Hoop was seen approaching the plate. "Sew this old game up right here!"

Hoop tried but his best effort was a high fly back of short which three Morton Tech players pranced under before agreeing on who should be allowed to take it. The left fielder was finally given the honor after Sandy had scampered on home and Hoop had run halfway to second. His catch ended long seconds of agony for both sides.

As Prescott took the field for the first of the eighth the score board read:

PRESCOTT 1
MORTON TECH 0

"Only six more outs!" encouraged a rooter, with an admiring glance toward Slim Becker on the mound. "Some old pitchers' battle, Slim! And here's where you outpitch a guy who hasn't been beaten this year!"

Slim was anxious enough to do it. As mar-

velous as had been Bugs Maxwell's pitching, Slim had actually permitted two less hits, matching Bugs' good work by holding Morton's heavy hitters in check. But the Morton Tech nine was a team not easily discouraged and came to bat this inning determined to equalize the count.

The first batter beat out a slow roller down the first-base line.

"There's the tying run on base!" shouted a Morton Tech coacher. "Come on, boys! Drive it around!"

Pitching carefully, Slim nevertheless could not prevent the laying down of a bunt which advanced the runner to second from where it would be possible for him to score on a single. Tracy, one of Tech's most dangerous hitters was at bat next. Pink Barringer, Prescott catcher, came out in front of the plate to talk matters over.

"What do you think?" asked Pink, "Better walk him?"

"It's up to you," rejoined Slim, and both instinctively looked toward the bench. But Coach Potter made no sign. It was up to their judgment.

"Walk him!" decided Pink, "I think he's about due to crash one."

Amid howls from the Morton Tech bench, Tracy was given a free pass. Men on second and first and only one down.

"We're all with you!" supported the Prescott infield. "Stick with 'em, Slim, old boy!"

The next batter, swinging hard at an outdrop, topped the ball and tapped it toward pitcher's box. Slim ran in to take it with the idea of cutting a runner down at third but the ball took a bad bound and he momentarily fumbled. With the stands yelling madly he made a quick recovery and threw the batter out at first by a step.

Men on second and third and two out!

"Boy, what a close call!" breathed someone. "If Tech had loaded the bases . . ."

But now the play was for first base on an infield hit and Morton Tech's bid for at least a tying run was going glimmering.

"We'll get 'em for you!" promised Slug, running up to pat Slim reassuringly on the shoulder. "Let 'em hit to me, big fellow!"

Ironically enough this is just what the next batter did—a scorching drive which Slug captured by a mad one-handed stab out where the

grass began. As he set himself for the throw to first the runner from second raced in front of him, bound for home. Slug naturally withheld the peg for an instant, then seeing that the Tech batsman was dangerously near first, he released the ball with all the force he could command.

"Ooooow!" yelled the Prescott crowd in a frenzy of despair.

Slug's hurried peg had gone wild, clearing the frantically leaping Phil Stone's glove by a good two feet!

The coacher at third jubilantly waved the second runner on home with the run that sent Morton Tech into the lead—2 to 1!

The batsman dug out merrily for second and reached it easily before the ball could be retrieved.

"Both runs unearned!" lamented a fan, as the last Tech batter was retired on a looping fly to center which Tom Perry caught without moving. "What a break in the game that was! And what a time Slug picked for that terrible heave!"

Prescott players trotted in to the bench for their half of the eighth, glum faced. Sandy,

mercifully, said nothing to Slug but the Chief Terror had his own idea as to what his rival must be thinking.

"That's all right!" he challenged, as they came in together, "but you know who's really responsible for that wild throw, don't you?"

Sandy looked at Slug queerly and shook his head.

"*You!*" blazed Slug. "If it hadn't been for my arm . . ."

"I thought you'd pick on that for an alibi!" retorted Sandy at once. "That's why I called your hand on it yesterday! That's one alibi that doesn't stick with me! You were throwing all right until . . ."

"Yeah, but this was a quick, snappy throw and it jerked something in here," said Slug lamely. "Oh, I won't say anything to Coach —don't worry!"

But fellow players could tell by the attitudes of the two as they reached the bench, what had transpired.

"Pretty small stuff!" voiced Hoop. "It's his own fault. He's been trying so hard to outshine everyone else the whole game that's he's

not been worth a cent! Might better had him out of the line-up!"

"Never mind that!" begged Sandy. "We've got to pull this game out of the fire somehow! Who's up? . . . Rudie? . . . Get on and we'll bring you in!"

But Bugs Maxwell, with a one-run lead to work on, proved invincible so far as Prescott's next three batters were concerned, setting two of them down on strikes and throwing the other out at first.

"It's all over now but the shouting!" prophesied someone, gloomily.

"A tough game for Slim to lose," bemoaned one of his admirers. "Tech shouldn't have had a run!"

Coach Potter petitioned his players as they left the bench for their last inning in the field.

"Hold 'em, men! Anything can happen yet! We're only one run behind!"

The strain of the battle had been great, particularly on the pitchers who had borne the heaviest burdens. Slim Becker naturally felt the let down first due to the cracking of his infield at a critical moment while Bugs Maxwell,

by the very same token, felt a new lease of power.

"I can hold those babies now!" he told his team mates confidently. "But I don't mind saying this Prescott gang's the toughest crowd I've faced!"

"They've only been tough because of the good pitching they've been getting, too," said the Morton Tech coach. "Step out, fellows, this ninth inning, and show Prescott how much better than they you really are! Let's see you trot in a couple of *earned* runs so they can't say you won on an error!"

Imbued with this idea, the Tri-State Champions went to bat determined to prove their real class. With one down, two batters singled in succession, the second one-base clout being too short to permit the base runner ahead to take third.

"Slim's blowing up!" said a spectator, uneasily.

The Prescott infield bunched around its twirler consolingly.

"Steady down, old war horse! We'll take 'em for you!" they chimed.

Slim, nervous and fidgety, faced the next

batter. The first ball was so wide that it almost eluded catcher Pink Barringer.

Over at short, Captain Slug Pickens was holding secret communion with himself.

"That break of mine's cost us the game," he told himself. "We'll never be able to crack this guy Bugs for another run. We're done right now. If Morton Tech would only score a couple more it would let me out . . . but if we lose by the two runs I let in . . . good night! I'd never live it down!"

The thought caused Slug to stir uneasily. The whole team seemed to be wobbling uncertainly. Pent-up feelings were about to explode in the form of a complete blow-up.

"If it wasn't for that guy Sandy!" Slug muttered.

And then the batter at the plate hit—a fast bounding drive coming his way! The base runner from second flashed in front of the ball, hesitated purposely the fraction of a second to obstruct Slug's vision, then continued on toward third. Instinctively Slug knew that the play called for an attempt at a force out at third. Instinctively also something else flashed in his mind. Here was his chance to . . . If

Sandy should make an error and a run should score on account of it . . . Slug fielded the ball cleanly and, almost in the same motion, hurled it to third with all the force he could command.

Totally unprepared for such a speedy throw at comparatively close range, Sandy could only get his glove in front of the ball and deflect it . . . the impact of ball and gloved hand sounding like a pistol report.

"Go on in! Go on in!" cried the Tech coacher at third, as Sandy, temporarily befuddled, ran around in circles looking for the ball which had rolled out into the left field, some dozen feet away.

But just as the runner set sail for home, Sandy espied the ball and dove for it. He made a barehanded recovery, scooping it off the grass and, while in a half-stooping position, winged it toward a wide-eyed Pink Barringer, crouched at the plate. The peg was nothing short of phenomenal, the ball smacking into Pink's mitt as the runner lunged toward the plate. Pink fell into the cleated feet and tagged the tangle of legs.

"Out!" ruled the umps.

The other base runner, seeing the play for his team mate at the plate, had rounded second and was making a try for third.

"Right back!" screamed Sandy to Pink, and Prescott's burly backstop struggled to his feet, shooting the ball on a whizzing line back to third.

Sandy caught the ball near the base and on the inside, simply shooting out his gloved hand as the other base runner came sliding in.

"Out!" ruled the umps once more, following with a wave of his arm, "Side retired!"

"What do you know about that?" gasped Slug, astounded at the whirlwind turn of events. "Everything I do to that guy is a boomerang!"

The conversion of what had looked to be a bad error into the most brilliant fielding play of the entire game brought a roar of applause from the crowd and revived drooping Prescott hopes. Sandy, however, with the completion of the play, had thoughts only for Slug.

"Yeah! I hurt your arm!" he chided, "after the way you steamed that at me!"

Slug, face flushed, made no answer, trotting

in ahead of the Chief Terror who was met near the third base coaching line by an irate Pink Barringer.

"You see that?" asked Sandy, in an undertone.

"Did I see it!" repeated Pink, bitterly, "what you gonna do about it?"

"Nothing!" grinned Sandy. "It worked out all right, didn't it? We might not have got out of that hole if it hadn't happened . . . so we really ought to thank Slug for it!"

Slim Becker, approaching from behind, put an arm about Sandy and Pink.

"The Terrors'll probably love me for this," he said, apologetically. "But I'm darn sorry for the way Slug's acting. He's off his nut, I guess . . . any guy who'd do a thing like that! . . . You fellows sure pulled me out of a tough spot!"

"That's all right," rejoined Sandy. "Isn't that what we're on the team for?"

Slim sailed his glove into the dugout without further comment. He had given his all for Prescott in the most masterful game he had ever pitched, unbounded by the thought that he was a Terror. And yet, one of his fellow Ter-

rors had stood between him and what might have been victory.

"Slug," said Slim, as he dropped wearily down on the bench beside his captain, "you've tried all this game to take it out on Sandy when you've really been taking it out on me . . . on yourself . . . and, worst of all, on Prescott! . . . So now I hope you're satisfied!"

Slug stared at his fellow Terror, greatly crestfallen. There was nothing that he could say. It was all too true. He'd been so jealous of his baseball prowess . . . his leadership in everything . . . he'd been willing to sacrifice . . . Slug leaped to his feet.

"Save me a bat, you fellows!" he begged. "Get on, one of you! . . . Get on and I promise . . ."

But Captain Slug Pickens, whatever his suddenly avowed intentions, was to be denied the opportunity of redeeming himself, for Prescott's first two batters went down on easy outs to first and Tom Perry's frenzied bid for a hit was pulled in by the Tech right fielder on a spectacular running catch out near the fence for the final put out of as tough a game as Prescott High would ever be called upon to lose.

With the catch, Prescott team members reached disconsolately for bats and gloves, bent on getting out of sight as quickly as possible to mask their feelings from the crowd.

"Boy, this is a hard one to take!" said Hoop, making no bones over his disappointment. "We really deserved a one to nothing shut-out if it hadn't been for a guy who thought more of himself than of anything else. If I was a Terror I'd be ashamed to own him!"

And for once, a direct broadside such as this, was permitted by the Terrors to go unchallenged.

CHAPTER IX

HATS IN THE RING

"You see, fellows," pointed out Chief Wildcat Sandy early the following week, "we really didn't have to do anything to Slug but give him plenty of rope. He's hanging himself right now with his own Terrors."

"I'll say he is!" declared Sly. "He was so peeved the day of the game because his idea of spoiling our clubhouse didn't get a rise out of us, that he just had to take out his feelings some way!"

"Right!" agreed Dan, "and he didn't get in any too well with the fans, either. They're wise that something was wrong and he was to blame."

"Yes, sir!" chimed in Pink, "Wildcat stock's rising!"

"Hats off to Sandy!" complimented Hoop. "It's been kind of hard to follow his orders but they're certainly getting results. Too bad we had to lose that game, though."

"Well," ruminated Sly, "if we had to lose a big game I'd rather it would have been to Morton Tech than Redfield. Redfield's been our rival for years and they certainly have lambasted us!"

"But we've a good chance of beating 'em this year," said Pink, "if those Terrors . . ."

"That's just it," finished Sandy. "We've got to tend to them first . . . get them all washed up before that game if we hope to win it!"

Fellow Wildcats nodded. They had paused momentarily in their labors at repairing Junk Villa. The clubhouse was again commencing to take on a respectable appearance as well as the grounds about it . . . and Wildcat pride in the accomplishment was mounting.

"Fellows!" exclaimed Hoop, after an admiring look about, "if I do say so myself, I think we've done wonders to old Look Out Point. Almost everyone stops to look down at it from the road and our clubhouse is just about the talk of East Prescott!"

Sandy smiled.

"That's because we've built it where we

have," he said, "on a part of the city dump grounds."

"You know what?" related Dan. "My dad's not so hot on this clubhouse business! . . . Says he doesn't want me hanging around where it's so dirty."

"Dirty?" scoffed Sly. "You tell him it's as clean as his front yard."

"I did," grinned Dan, "but he wouldn't believe it. Claims he's coming down to see and if I've been stuffing him, I can't have any more to do with Junk Villa."

"Great!" cried Sandy, "that gives me an idea! . . . Why can't we invite all our dads down to look the place over? . . . You never can tell . . . we might need 'em behind us. If the city council should take a notion to jump on us for using a piece of city property . . ."

Wildcats looked at one another with sudden apprehension.

"Boy . . . and those councilmen could do it, too!" said Hoop.

"You bet they could!" rejoined Sandy, "and make us get off and stay off! What we want and need is the good will of our side of town

so if the council should ever start anything, men like our dads would stand up for us!"

"Sandy, you've got a brain that's simply colossal!" praised Sly, "and if that's apple sauce I hope to eat my words!"

"You ought to be in politics!" commended Pink.

"This *is* politics!" emphasized Sandy, "and we've been playing politics right along. We haven't had the physical strength of the opposition so we've had to sit back and pull strings and figure ways and means to beat 'em. But I can begin to see now, if we can interest our dads in Junk Villa, we can begin to buck the whole West Side!"

Sandy's declaration was startling in its suggestiveness. A Terror was a Terror whether he was a juvenile or an adult. And expanding the battle lines to include grown-up territory was a new development opening up all sorts of speculation and possibilities.

"Who knows?" Sandy continued. "The building of our clubhouse may turn out to be the shot heard 'round the world as far as Prescott's concerned!"

"We've been ruled by the Terrors long

enough,'' voiced Hoop, in ready agreement. ''And West Prescott's run East Prescott long enough! . . . It sure would be great if we could bring everything to a head at once and get it over with!''

''Let's try anyhow!'' proposed Dan. ''I'll guarantee to bring my dad down here to-morrow night if the rest of you fellows'll do the same!''

''Right after supper,'' suggested Pink. ''There's about an hour and a half of daylight left. Hate to have 'em get caught down here after dark. They'd never get out of these dump grounds alive!''

Fellow Wildcats laughed.

''Not even with us as experienced guides?'' asked Sandy, amused. ''To-morrow's the night, then—Dad's Night at Junk Villa!''

The following evening watchers on the opposite shore exclaimed in open-mouthed amazement at a veritable caravan on foot which wended its way with great caution down the steep, junk-ridden slopes leading from the road to the neck of land known as Look Out Point.

''Holy smoke!'' shouted Fat, who had

brought field glasses into play. "It's a bunch of men! . . . What do you s'pose they're going down there for?"

"Here! Let me have a look!" cried Chief Terror Slug Pickens, seizing the glasses. "Hmm! Looks like their dads. . . . I think I recognize Mister Overman . . . and . . . yeah! There's Mister Sanderson—that big man who just slipped and almost fell down!"

"Gosh!" whistled Phil, "those guys must be proud of *nothing!* . . . I wouldn't think of having my dad come near such a place!"

"Well, they've got some reason for it, don't worry!" rejoined Slug. "Probably getting ready to pull a fast one on us! . . . You can depend on it, they haven't forgotten what we did to their clubhouse no matter if they haven't opened up about it."

"Aw, Slug!" laughed Slim, "you're sure a suspicious cuss! I'll bet there's nothing more serious going on than a weenie roast!"

"You wait and see!" was Slug's retort. "All I got to say is, I'm glad my dad's going to run for councilman at large this election! He said the other day those Wildcats didn't have any business monkeying around the city prop-

erty and he'd put a stop to it quick if he got on the council!"

"Hooray!" cried Fat, "that's a new way to take a crack at those Wildcats! Tell your dad if he needs anyone to get out and work for him —we're it!"

"I've already told him that," replied Slug.

"Well, you certainly were sure of yourself, weren't you?" guyed Slim.

"No," grinned Slug, "I was just sure of you fellows!"

Arriving at Junk Villa after risking torn clothes and possible injury in the descent, the group of East Prescott business men exhibited great fatherly interest in their immediate surroundings.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Cooley to his son, Sly, "I've never seen Look Out Point looking like this before! Never!"

"I guess the oldest inhabitant hasn't, either," laughed Mr. Overman. "Remarkable what the boys have done to this! Takes the old Point back to the days of the Indians!"

"Wouldn't the Injuns go up in smoke if they could see this river bank now!" offered Dan.

"Why Indians?" challenged Mr. Overman. "The white people ought to be going up in smoke! It's a crime this dump ground has to be here. I've always kicked about it but it hasn't done any good!"

"If you don't mind my saying so, gentlemen," spoke Mr. Sanderson, senior, "as a newcomer to East Prescott, I have wondered from the first at your town's nearsightedness in permitting its natural beauty to be so outrageously blotted out!"

"This is how it came to pass," explained Mr. Barringer. "Years ago Prescott only existed on the west side of the river and then, except for a narrow strip on the west bank, most of the garbage and junk was dumped on this side. Since that time, however, the town has grown rapidly but its control has remained with the West Side and we on the East Side have been unable to get this eyesore removed."

"Why, gentlemen!" went on Mr. Sanderson, extending his arm majestically, "stand here with me and gaze up and down this most beautiful Boardman River! This very Look Out Point should be one of the beauty spots of the town. Do you mean to tell me that the proper

organized effort could not succeed in wiping out this shameful state of affairs? This situation reflects upon the self-respect of our community! It's high time, if you'll allow me to say it, that East Prescott was up in arms about it. Picture our sons, who should be entitled to the great natural advantages of our town, being forced to clear a place on the river bank. Picture the filth which even now surrounds them! Picture in its stead a beautiful park—city property dedicated to the clean, pleasurable use of its citizens . . . something of which to be proud! . . . That's the vision we should be holding of this river land . . . and we shouldn't rest, from this day on, until the vision is realized!"

"Mr. Sanderson," addressed Mr. Holliday, who had been listening intently, "sometimes it remains for an outsider to come in and to see a town's faults more clearly than we old residents simply because we've become so used to the faults as to be almost blind to them. I, for one, am shocked at the conditions I find here, now that I've given them close examination. And I heartily approve of every word you said. We've been mighty negligent about this condi-

tion and something drastic ought to be done about it. But just what *can* be done is a question. As I remember it, this matter did get up before the council several years ago—but was voted down and city dumping grounds cannot be moved without a new ordinance is drafted and put through by the council."

"Then that's the thing to get to work on!" decided Mr. Sanderson.

Chief Wildcat Sandy winked at fellow Wildcats who were giving rapt attention to the discussion of their elders.

"Looks like we've started something!" whispered Hoop.

"And *how!*" voiced Dan.

"But how would you go about getting action from the council?" Mr. Barringer wanted to know. "They're a hard-headed bunch when anything's brought up pertaining to East Prescott."

"Only way to do is vote four men onto that council whom you feel will be favorable to the things that should be done for your side of town," advised Mr. Sanderson. "Time's absolutely ripe now to get out in the field with

candidates and launch a campaign for Community Betterment."

The group of East Prescott fathers exchanged consulting glances.

"A very good suggestion!" approved Mr. Holliday, "providing, of course, that you take over the management of the campaign!"

"Exactly!" seconded Mr. Overman. "Just as I was thinking!"

"You could do and say things, being a new man in the community, that would make a much more forceful impression," pointed out Mr. Cooley, "and for that reason . . ."

"You're just the man for the job!" finished Mr. Barringer.

"Well," laughed Mr. Sanderson, "I see I've talked myself into a lot of work. But I'll gladly accept the assignment, knowing that I can call upon you gentlemen for whatever assistance I may need!"

"Boys!" censured Mr. Overman, as all joined in hearty laughter, "you've got your poor old dads in plenty of trouble, bringing us down here. And it may mean the loss of your clubhouse before we get through."

"Yes," took up Mr. Sanderson, eyes twinkling, "if we can put our river bank improvement plan over, your Junk Villa will disappear along with the junk!"

It was now the Wildcats' turn to exchange consulting glances. But their response was quick in coming.

"That's okay with us!" answered Hoop, speaking for the bunch. "If you men are able to clean up this side of the Boardman we'll be tickled pink to give up our clubhouse!"

"You bet!" seconded Sly. "Anything that's for the good of East Prescott!"

"Yea!" cried the bunch.

Chief Wildcat Sandy, mindful that he was a comparatively new resident, had let the fellows speak for themselves.

"Our hats are in the ring," he now volunteered, "and if there's anything we can do, just call on us!"

"Very good!" accepted Mr. Sanderson, senior. "May we call on you at once for the use of your clubhouse to hold our first campaign meeting in?"

"We are honored," returned Sandy, with a

bow. "Make this your campaign headquarters if you like."

The elders chuckled.

"Wish we could," smiled Mr. Overman, "but it's too plagued hard to get down here. I don't know now how I'm ever going to get up again."

As their fathers entered the shack christened "Junk Villa," fellow Wildcats fell upon one another with much joyous back-slapping. And Sandy, gazing across the river at the Terrors' hang out, shook his fist as he grinningly exclaimed: "Look out, you guys! You and your dads are in for a battle this time that's going to be a *real* one!"

CHAPTER X

RED-HOT POLITICS

"WHAT do you know?" exploded Hoop, breaking in on a group of Wildcats as they were leaving the field house following baseball practice the next afternoon, "here's news!"

"Shoot!" invited Sly, "let's see what *you* consider news!"

"All right—I just heard Slug Pickens' dad is going out for councilman at large."

"Gee!" exclaimed Sandy, "then he's going against my dad!"

"Yeah, but he doesn't know it because your dad hasn't announced yet," said Hoop. "And we've kept quiet."

"Say, that's funny!" laughed Sandy. "Now it'll look to Slug, when he finds my dad's running against his dad, that we've gone and got him to oppose Mr. Pickens on purpose."

"What do we care?" rejoined Sly, "that makes it all the better! I'd like to give those guys something to worry about!"

"They'll have plenty to worry about when this campaign gets under way!" said Dan, confidently. "My dad's turned over his printing office to the cause and inside a week or two we'll be plastering the town with bills."

"We'll have to do a good job of it, too," emphasized Pink, "because we can't count on getting much support from the newspaper. The *Morning Blade's* always favored the West Side. Probably because they get most of their business over there."

"They'll have to print paid ads, though!" declared Sandy. "And after Mr. Overman and Mr. Holliday and my dad have filed their names as candidates from their wards, they're going to come out with a full page ad that'll knock West Prescott for a row of . . ."

"Garbage cans!" put in Hoop.

"Well, something like that!" Sandy admitted, laughing.

"Of course it would be too good to be true for all three of our candidates to be elected," said Dan, "but I think Mr. Sanderson has a good chance as councilman at large . . . and concilmen elected from West Prescott aren't

apt to be so prejudiced against him on account of his not living here so very long."

"I'll say he hasn't been here long," remarked Pink, "just barely long enough to be able to run for office. Dan's right, though . . . Mr. Sanderson ought to be able to line up the council . . . not being either really a Terror or a Wildcat . . . and if he can once get three of the seven men for him, he can swing the thing by casting the deciding vote himself!"

"It listens well," agreed Hoop, "but only time will tell!"

West Prescott was indeed shocked, nay—stunned—on receipt of news that the other half of the town had entered politics in an organized way. Heretofore there had been no necessity of East Prescott being taken seriously, whether in politics or what not. And even now it was difficult to believe that this sudden flurry would amount to much more than a gesture.

"It'll all die down in a week or two," predicted the West Prescott political bosses.

But with the passing of two weeks the inhabitants of West Prescott were forced to confess that, this time, a new spirit was animating their

not exactly friendly neighbors across the river. East Prescott was spendnig honest-to-goodness money to air her grievances in the *Morning Blade* . . . telling the other half of herself what she thought of it in a nice but firm way. "We don't want more than's coming to us," one statement read, "but we do, at least, want that!"

"Looks like they've really got their dander up!" said old Squire Watson, Fat's father. "Say, those crazy folks on that side of the river have got more'n they deserve a long time ago. And the more they've got, the more they've hollered. Now I suppose they've found out that hollerin' pays so they've decided to make one awful noise!"

Ward bosses in West Prescott, conferring on this new uprising, sought first to determine its cause.

"My boy tells me," related Frank J. Pickens, candidate for councilman at large, "that this whole business has been stirred up by those Wildcats building a shack on the city dump grounds. I complained to the council about it a couple weeks ago but nobody took it seriously. The time to have nipped this thing was

in the bud. Big oaks from little acorns grow. You've probably heard that before but I just want to state that it's lots harder to chop down an oak than it is to crush an acorn."

"Brother Pickens is absolutely and positively right!" endorsed Judge Quackenberry, veteran of many wily campaigns. "Our political ax must be sharpened as never before for this fight. East Prescott must be kept in her place or we shall have no end of trouble. In that connection I recommend that our loyal sons —the Terrors, if you please—lend themselves to our cause by securing as much information as possible on the intentions of the opposition . . . this information to be largely gained from mingling with the East Side students at school!"

"A capital idea!" seconded Mr. Pickens, "but this matter has already been taken care of. My boy, Slug, has volunteered to get the dope from the Wildcats if he has to *scare* it out of 'em."

"Even better!" pronounced Judge Quackenberry. "My! My! That takes me back to the old days. Remember, Frank, how we used to duck those Wildcats in the pool by the foun-

tain? They're East Prescott business men to-day but they still hold us in respect . . . and fear! That's one reason I still can't understand this sudden rebellion. . . ."

"Ah!" broke in Councilman Scott, who had filed for reëlection, "I've done a little investigating on my own hook and I find that East Prescott's campaign has been inspired and organized by a new resident—Mister Jordan P. Sanderson!"

"Oh, yes!" recalled Mr. Pickens, "he's got a son the boys call Sandy. I've heard Slug speak of him. He's a terror . . . a . . . er . . . I mean . . . he's really a Wildcat but the things he's pulled against our West Side fellows . . ."

"Then those Sandersons are apparently running East Prescott!" deduced Judge Quackenberry. "Beats all how people can come in from outside these days and throw monkey wrenches into everybody's machinery! Wouldn't think East Prescott would stand for it!"

"They'll stand for anything that gives 'em a chance to take a crack at us!" declared Councilman Scott, "so we mustn't let ourselves take this situation too lightly, gentlemen! We must

put on our armor and go boldly out to meet the foe, rallying our voters behind us that we may hand East Prescott a punishing defeat at the polls!"

With the feelings of West Prescott politicians running high, citizens of East Prescott met to formulate secret plans for sending those feelings still higher.

"You catch more flies with sirup than you do with vinegar!" Campaign Manager Sanderson pointed out, "and we want to direct our appeal to the decent citizenry of West Prescott. This opposition to East Prescott has simply become a habit . . . or let us say—a tradition. And we must overcome it by calling upon their sense of right and wrong . . . make them realize that by helping East Prescott they are actually helping themselves!"

Under Mr. Sanderson's direction a circular was prepared to slip inside an envelope, addressed particularly to the citizens of West Prescott and carrying these burning words:

ALL WE ASK IS FAIR PLAY!

The circular itself contained striking head-

lines, aimed directly at the core of existing conditions.

VOTE TO END PETTY FEELINGS AND
THE SILLY FEUDS WHICH HAVE
BEEN HOLDING YOUR
CITY BACK

East and West Prescott Need Improvements
Badly

Your Representatives Have Had Many Chances
To Help the City and Thus Help
You—Have They Done It?

End This Bickering by Electing
—JORDAN P. SANDERSON—
New and Unbiased East Prescott Resident
Councilman at Large

Let Mr. Sanderson Represent Both Sides of the
City on the Council and Arbitrate the
City's Vital Needs

We Need a Councilman at Large Who Is *Big*
Enough to See PRESCOTT as a *Whole*

"There's a broadside!" commented Mr. Hol-

liday, in reading it over, "that we want to get into every home in West Prescott without fail. And the distribution of these circulars should be entrusted to our boys. Those Wildcats will see that the job's done right!"

On learning of their being commissioned with this task, fellow Wildcats gladly accepted, holding a meeting at once to work out plans of distribution.

"Passing out these circulars is going to be no easy job," said Chief Wildcat Sandy. "We're practically certain to have those Terrors on our necks the minute we start."

"You're dern tootin' we are!" confirmed Hoop. "They're not going to let us get away with this if they can help it."

"Only thing I see is to supply the fellows, who are picked to go from house to house, with bodyguards," suggested Sandy. "Anybody else any ideas?"

"You don't think the sight of these bodyguards would invite attack, do you?" asked Pink.

"No," rejoined Sandy. "On the other hand I figure it will let the Terrors know in advance

that we're prepared for them . . . and they may decide to let us alone."

"But we have to concentrate our forces that way," objected Hoop. "Otherwise we could spread out and cover the West Side with these bills in three hours' time."

"It'll take longer, that's true," admitted Sandy, "but it'll be safer."

And the plan, as a consequence, was adopted.

"Hey, for Pete's sake!" exclaimed Slug Pickens several nights later as he, with a group of fellow Terrors was homeward bound, "see what those Wildcats are doing!"

Ahead of them, on one of West Prescott's most prominent residential streets, a bunch of Wildcats were walking—a band of them on either side of the street, keeping pace with two of their number who ran up and down steps to houses and dropped white envelopes inside doors.

"That's got to be stopped!" Slug cried, immediately aroused. "They're trying to flood our side of town with propaganda! . . . Round up the rest of our gang, Fat, and we'll

trail these Wildcats, keeping out of sight till you get back. Say, fellows, this is going to be murder!"

Fat tore off in feverish haste as the Terrors with Slug gave attention to stealthily stalking their prey.

"They haven't gotten very far yet," Slug observed. "Some nerve—picking the best part of town to start in! Suppose they wanted to make sure of covering our most influential people! . . . Boy, I'll bet the stuff in those circulars is hot, too . . . or else they'd be running it in the paper. The *Morning Blade* probably wouldn't even accept it as advertising!"

"Wish we could get hold of a copy!" said Phil.

"Huh! We'll get hold of *all* the copies pretty soon!" declared Slug, glancing about. "Hope Fat's able to locate enough of our guys to chase these Wildcats. They're counting on us trying to stop 'em or they wouldn't be out in force!"

Trailing the Wildcats for the better part of three blocks without any more Terrors showing up to swell their number, Slug Pickens decided that something desperate must be attempted.

"They know we outnumber them when we've got our force together," he said. "Maybe if we charged them, making a great hullabaloo, they'd turn tail and beat it!"

"I don't think so," counseled Phil, "those Wildcats are going to be tough to chase this time. We've got to figure some better way than that!"

"I've got it!" cried Slug, face beaming. "They're bound to turn off on Morrison Avenue next and you know that block that's being repaired?"

Fellow Terrors nodded wonderingly.

"There's a fire hose attached to one of the fire plugs," went on Slug. "It's been there for the last two days, right next to the little work shanty. They've held up work on the street waiting for some new material or something. Anyhow, if we could cut through to Morrison, hide behind that shanty and cut loose with that water when the Wildcats get up close . . ."

"Let's do it!" cried Phil, "that's the ticket! . . . The water cure again! But this time we do *all* the ducking!"

Exactly as Slug had surmised, the fire hose

was found, laid in a neat coil with the nozzle resting on top, the shanty closed and no workmen in sight. And also, as Slug had surmised, the Wildcats swung onto Morrison Avenue, two blocks down, headed their way.

"Can you work the handle that turns on the water?" Slug asked of Phil as he and two fellow Terrors prepared to hold the hose.

Phil tested the wrench.

"Yeah, she turns easy!" he grinned. "Oh, boy—the force of this water ought to just about knock those Wildcats off their feet!"

"And what it will do to those bills!" added Tom, enthusiastically.

"Keep behind this shanty, all of you!" commanded Slug. "They've got to walk right into us. Wait for my signal, Phil, before you give us the water!"

Phil nodded, crouching by the hydrant.

"Looks like the Terrors are all down at their clubhouse," Sandy was just saying to Sly. "If they are it's a good night for us to have come over here!"

"But they *aren't!*" yelled Sly, looking ahead,

his eyes suddenly bulging. "Look out, fellows! *Look out!*"

And then the deluge broke. A powerful stream of water shot toward the group of Wildcats on the sidewalk, scattering and battering them with its force. Gasping and scrambling, caught totally unawares, they could do nothing but retreat as a little knot of Terrors, grimly clinging to a writhing hose, swept the nozzle-directed stream from side to side to encompass all Wildcats within reach. Hoop Holliday, one of the bill carriers, was caught on a porch across the street, held prisoner by the stream which played with great force against the steps below. In trying to dash out during a moment when the shooting water was directed elsewhere, Hoop was swept from his feet and sent sliding down the remaining steps by a quick backswing, Terror Phil Stone spotting him just in time to direct the hose toward Hoop.

"Now over here!" shouted Phil, and the Terrors, led by Slug, in charge of the nozzle, spun it around to send a stream in pursuit of a scampering Dan Overman, who carried a sack of circulars on his back. The water spattered

against the sack with such force that white envelopes spouted out in a different sort of stream and Dan took on the sleek appearance of what is often referred to as a "drowned rat."

Rallying his Wildcats, Chief Sandy ordered a charge upon the small number of Terrors who had converted the fire hose into a machine gun of water. But, though the already drenched Wildcats sought to press in on three sides, so stinging was the stream of water which played against them that they were forced to drop back with smarting eyes, gulping for breath, each a sorry-looking sight. Moreover, many of their circulars were now strewn about lawns and sidewalks and those remaining in packs were soaking wet.

"We might as well beat it," advised Sandy, finally. "They've got the upper hand this time."

And a great, jeering cry went up from the small band of Terrors as the Wildcats fell back, completely repulsed.

"That gets even for what happened at the pool!" Slug called after them. "Now go peddle your bills!"

"We'll be back!" promised Hoop, shaking his fist.

"And we'll be right here, waiting for you!" answered Slug. "You won't even get as far as you did this time!"

Half an hour later a straggly string of Wildcats slid down the embankment to their much cherished Junk Villa and busied themselves with building a fire to dry their clothes.

"It's all my fault, gang," Sandy insisted, "I can't see now how I ever figured we could get away with passing bills in the open over there. I guess I just got too cocky the way things have been breaking lately. The Terrors sure got the laugh on us to-day!"

"Some volunteer firemen!" grinned Sly. "Boy, they hit everything they aimed at. I don't know how they'd be putting fires out but they certainly did put *us* out!"

"Well, commander," said Hoop, "you haven't made many strategic mistakes in your spectacular career. Not half as many as I made during my reign as Chief. So I, for one, can forgive. And I even ask you—where do we go from here?"

"Home!" was Sandy's immediate answer, "as soon as your clothes are dried. At home you are to go to bed at once, setting your alarm clocks for three o'clock in the morning!"

"What?"

"Hey!"

"Hold on!"

"And the second the alarm goes off you're to hop out of bed, into your duds, and beat it down to Mr. Overman's printing office. Dan is hereby instructed to get the loan of his dad's key so he can let us in. There we're to load up with new circulars and hit it over to West Prescott and cover the town before it's awake!"

Fellow Wildcats stared a moment, open mouthed.

"Jingo!" exclaimed Pink, "that's perfect! . . . And won't those Terrors be popeyed, waking up in the morning to find these circulars at their doors! . . ."

"Revenge is sweet!" smiled Sandy. "Those Terrors think they've got us stopped. Have they?"

"Yes, they have!" rejoined Hoop, grinning. "Until three A.M.!"

CHAPTER XI

A POEM WITH A PUNCH

Residents of West Prescott, arising between six and seven o'clock the following morning and reaching sleepily outside their front doors for the morning paper and milk bottles, were surprised to find white envelopes staring up at them, bearing the words:

ALL WE ASK IS FAIR PLAY!

These envelopes and the circulars they contained served to remove any and all last traces of sleepiness as they immediately became the subject of discussion for every West Prescott household.

"What's this? What's this?" demanded an irate Mr. Pickens, as he came back from his door to the breakfast table, brandishing the circular. "See here, son! I thought you told me you'd stopped the peddling of these bills!"

"We did!" insisted Slug, unbelievingly.

"Then how do you account for this?" raved

Mr. Pickens. "They're all up and down the street. I can see 'em sticking in doors . . . those where they haven't been taken in!"

Slug put a hand to his head, dazedly.

"I can't figure it," he replied, "unless they were put out early this morning!"

"They must have been!" decided Mr. Pickens. "They must have been! . . . Something will have to be done about this! . . . We'll have to get out a circular to counteract it. I can see that—see it very clearly."

"You get out the circular!" cried Slug, "and we'll peddle it. East Side . . . West Side! It's all the same to us! . . ."

At school later that morning Wildcats, looking a trifle tired but otherwise gloatingly happy, grinned broadly every time a Terror came in sight.

"Think you're smart, don't you?" Slug fired sullenly at Sandy, when the occasion presented.

"About what?" asked Sandy, guilelessly.

Slug ground his teeth and passed on, giving no sign that he heard the crack Sandy called after him. "Who's all wet this morning?"

Road trips on three successive Saturdays took the Prescott High ball team to Stanton, Melville and Warren, comparatively easy victories being scored over each opponent, the games presenting no opportunity for further outbreak of the feeling between Terrors and Wildcats.

"Good thing we won by safe margins," said a fan who was on the inside concerning conditions. "If the games had been close we might have kicked them away because the East and West Side's in no particular humor to play together on anything right now!"

But each Saturday saw the clash with Prescott's rival, Redfield, draw a week nearer with Terrors and Wildcats alike earnestly hoping to defeat Redfield this season. And, despite the fact that politics had pushed baseball temporarily into the background so far as town interest was concerned, Coach Potter commenced to point team members more and more toward what had always been considered the biggest game of the year.

"We've only lost one game this season," he would say, "and we had no business losing

that!'' he would add, for the purpose of rubbing it in. From such utterances it was evident that the Coach was determined to forestall any new development which might tend to throw the team off balance. As for the players, though little had been said, the sting of the Morton Tech defeat had still remained with them.

One study hour in school, Sandy, with his thoughts divided between the poem ''Barbara Frietchie'' which he was reading in English ''Lit'' and occasional thoughts of the political situation, was prompted to pick up his pencil and jot down a crazy parody which came to him. The result was a series of verses which he entitled ''A Crying Shame!''

On meeting fellow Wildcats after school, more in the spirit of fun than anything else, Sandy handed over the papers containing the verses.

''This is what happens when a guy gets poetical,'' he said.

Sly glanced at the verses skeptically.

'' 'The Crying Shame,' '' he read, ''pretty terrible as a starter.'' Then, as his eyes trav-

eled on, his interest obviously grew until he was chuckling roundly to himself and occasionally laughing out loud. "Say!" he finally exclaimed, "there's nothing wrong about this! It's darn good! Listen, you fellows! . . ." And Sly commenced reading, Wildcats lending amused attention:

"Up from the Boardman,
Rich with junk;
Clear in that hollow
Full of punk
The clustered piles of garbage stand—
Walled in by trash on every hand . . ."

"Gosh!" cried Dan, as Sly looked up, "go on!"

"On that bright morn
In early fall
When we marched over
The huge trash wall,
Over the garbage winding down—
Horse and foot into the great dump ground . . ."

"Wonderful!" breathed Pink, "I mean it!"

Sandy's face flushed. Sly continued:

"Forty piles with their uncouth spots,
Forty piles with their old tin pots
Scented the morning air—
The sun at noon looked down and saw
Forty more!

"Up rose the city dump man then,
Bowed with his fourscore years and ten,
Bravest of all on the garbage mound
He took up the job other men threw down.
On a portion of the dump the junk he set
To show that one heart was loyal yet."

"Oh, wow!" laughed Hoop, "that's rich!"

"Shut up!" ordered Dan. "Let him finish!"

"That's right!" appealed Sly. "Don't interrupt me! I want to do justice to this!"

The Wildcats became grinningly silent, leaning forward eagerly.

"Up the street came more loads of junk,
The tired drivers feeling punk;
Under their slouch hats they glanced
Left and right—
The city dump grounds met their sight.

"'Whoa!" The horses stopped their dash.
'Giddap!' Out blazed a ton of trash—
It shook the ground and rent the air
And raised an awful odor there.

"Quick as it fell to the old dump ground
The city dump man came around,
He looked at the dump, then shook his head
And turning to the drivers, said:
'Dump if you must this trash right here
But you'll have to find other grounds, I fear!'

"A shade of sadness, a blush of shame
Over the faces of the drivers came,

'There isn't another place in town
To dump this trash,' they said, with a frown.

"All day long up Union Street
Sounded the tread of marching feet,
All day long that garbage grew
Spreading more odors rank and new.

"To-day the river banks are heaping high
With mounds unsightly to the eye
And visitors hold their very noses
From smells of anything but posies! . . ."

"You missed a rhyme there!" criticized Pink.

"Oh, no!" denied Sandy, "I just took poetic license!"

"Here's the last two verses!" called Sly, "and boy, if you don't think they pack a *punch* . . ." He launched at once into their reading:

"The time is ripe for change of scene
A step to make our city clean—
Where East and West may join hands
To beautify the river lands.

"We hope that the dump man's work is o'er,
May the garbage be dumped on the banks no more—
Honor to those who change the place
And save Prescott from lasting disgrace!"

"There!" cried Sly, "How's that?"

"Bravo!" cried the bunch, almost in a breath; "A knock-out!"

"Say, that parody's a wonder!" declared Dan. "It's worth printing and shooting out all over town."

"But I just wrote it for fun," protested Sandy.

"Maybe you did," said Hoop, "but there's more to it than just a laugh. It takes a terrific rap at the old dump grounds."

"Let me show this to my dad and see what he thinks," begged Dan.

Sandy looked from one to the other of his fellow Wildcats, still under the impression they must be kidding.

"Well, if you want to," he consented, warily, "but I still don't see . . ."

"It's a masterpiece of its kind!" insisted Dan. "And I'll miss a good guess if it doesn't just about swing the election!"

Fellow Wildcats nodded approvingly.

"It's darn clever!" admitted Hoop, "and it might do some good at that. Our dads ought to know for certain anyway."

"Hey! Does that mean we'll have to peddle

more bills?" asked Sly. "Don't go starting anything that'll get us up at three again! I'm still catching up on my sleep from that last time!"

With the day of the election but a week off, political factions of East and West Prescott martialed their forces for a last-minute attack. Both sides had been holding back certain ammunition which was being heavily counted on to turn the tide at the polls.

"Here's a little piece of dynamite that'll hit the tax payers of this town smack between the eyes!" declared Frank J. Pickens, candidate for councilman at large, holding up a folder that he had taken from a plain white envelope. "Our boys are going to cover the town night before election so's East Prescott won't have a chance to come back at us! The voters'll get this circular first thing election morning and you can bet they'll go to the polls prepared to vote for the councilmen that'll protect their pocketbooks!"

Unfolding the folder, Mr. Pickens revealed the headlines.

TAXPAYERS—BEWARE!

REMOVAL OF CITY DUMPING GROUNDS WOULD CALL FOR INCINERATOR PLANT

Go Slow, Fellow Citizens

Consider the Cost!

Great Increase in Taxes Necessary to Remove Present Dump Grounds!

"A masterpiece of its kind!" declared Judge Quackenberry. "Mr. Pickens, you are a politician after my own heart. I predict a great future for you."

"Thank you, Judge . . . thank you!" accepted Mr. Pickens, beaming. "You can rest assured I'm politician enough not to let East Prescott put anything over on us!"

"It's a blow struck in defense of the poor taxpayer that always strikes home," emphasized Councilman Scott, oratorically. "That's what's kept me on the council eight years, my unaltering stand for rock-ribbed economy!"

At a meeting of city fathers taking place at the same time but upon the East Side of the river, somewhat similar comments were being made.

"I tell you, gentlemen," Mr. Overman was saying, "our good friend and leader, Mr. Sanderson, is naturally a bit modest about this unusual piece of poetry because his own son is the author. But if ever a bit of verse was inspired . . . if ever Providence extended a hand to help us in this fight to lift East Prescott's head to the proud place it belongs, then these words, put in the mouth of this boy, are it!"

"I second the motion!" smiled Mr. Holliday. "For a piece of political propaganda it is unparalleled—hitting the nail squarely on the head and driving the point home till it hurts!"

"And the time to put this poem in the hands of the voters is the very last minute!" asserted Mr. Barringer.

"Absolutely!" thundered Mr. Overman, "and I move you, Mr. Chairman, that the Wildcats be instructed to attend to the distribution of this poem which I will cause to have printed up at my shop. Let the boys be further instructed to put this printed matter out on the night before election!"

"So be it!" pronounced Campaign Manager Sanderson, rapping the table with his gavel as the motion met with general acclaim.

Great was the excitement in East and West Prescott the night before election. Great had been the heated comment exchanged by both sides all week. The columns of the *Morning Blade,* only newspaper in town, had been crowded with it. The street corners had presented scenes of noisy groups engaged in verbal combat. In a few instances words had failed and combat had become physical. Never had the town been so internally upset. And never before had an election been admittedly in doubt. But this year, due to East Prescott's well organized and persistent opposition, the results of to-morrow's polls remained a matter of conjecture.

"Last-Minute Swing to One Side or Other Expected," was the heading of editorial comment in the *Morning Blade.* Graybeards on the West Side smiled at this and pulled confidently at their whiskers. In a few hours, under cover of darkness, every home would be visited with a white envelope containing a warning missile —an economic dart which would overcome in one piercing shaft the force of any and all appeals made by the opposition.

"Those bills are now stored in the shed be-

hind my house," said Mr. Pickens. "I've had the boys busy all afternoon folding them and putting them in envelopes. They've then been placed in sacks ready for the boys to pick up at eleven to-night. I've equipped each boy with a flash light and they figure that, by three or four in the morning, every house in East and West Prescott will be peddled."

Judge Quackenberry nodded in approval.

"Your engineering of this proposition has been flawless," he commended. "In my balmiest days I have not conceived or executed anything better. Mr. Pickens, I salute you to-night as the next councilman at large!"

"Thank you, Judge," bowed Mr. Pickens, "the East Side will learn to-night that we who once were Terrors—are Terrors still!"

CHAPTER XII

TO THE VICTORS!

"Is THIS the place?" asked a voice from out the darkness of the alley.

"Yeah, I'm sure it is," replied another voice. "See—there's the shed!"

The driver of the truck applied the brakes and softened his motor to a purring throb. Figures leaped stealthily from the running board and the cabin of the truck.

"You positive we can get in all right?"

"Positive! I tried the window this afternoon. It's unlocked. I'll slip through and open the door."

Willing hands lifted the figure up and through as the window slid noiselessly down. A flash light played about the interior—an interior filled with bulging brand new newsboy sacks. Climbing over these sacks the figure quickly unlocked the door and swung it open onto the alley.

"All right, you fellows!" he called cau-

tiously, "see how those sacks are piled? We'll work in a double line! One line takes these sacks out and loads 'em on the truck . . . the other line takes our sacks off the truck and piles 'em in this shed exactly like the other sacks were! Savvy?"

The figures, all carefully rehearsed, nodded.

"Two of you watch either way!" ordered the the leader. "Now everyone to work and make it snappy!"

The next fifteen minutes saw feverish but almost soundproof effort with scarcely a motion wasted. At the end of this time the interior of the shed looked as though it had not been touched . . . piles of brand new newsboy sacks, bulging with white envelopes containing each a folder, were back in place. The figure who had entered the shed through the window went inside, locked the door from within, crawled again over the sacks to the window, was helped to the outside by his comrades, and the window carefully closed Then the figures made their way quietly back to the truck, leaped aboard and were driven away, chuckling mightily to themselves.

"It sure paid to keep an eye on what those

Terrors were up to this week," said one.

"You bet!" laughed another, "and it's sure going to save us a lot of work to-night!"

"Yes!" agreed a third, nervously, "if the substitution's not discovered!"

At a quarter of eleven another group of figures gathered by appointment and were met by a gentleman who jangled a bunch of keys.

"Boys," he said, as he unlocked the door of the shed, "it does my heart good to note your interest in civic affairs. This little job you're to do to-night is going to bring West Prescott victory in one of the bitterest political battles in the town's history. It must give you a thrill to be taking part in it. I know it did me, at your age! I've seen lots of red fire in my time, I'll tell you . . . and it's West Prescott that's done the burning of it! There'll be plenty of red fire to-morrow night, too . . . and you'll be in on it! . . . Well, I don't want to be holding you up. Get busy now and don't miss a house!"

Willing hands grabbed up the sacks and swung them onto sturdy shoulders. By prearrangement different groups hurried off down

the alley. Two automobiles swallowed up some of the peddlers who were to begin at distant points. In ten minutes the shed was empty of its sacks and not a figure was to be seen except the figure of a middle-aged man, humming happily to himself as he pushed the door shut and locked it.

"So far, so good!" said the voice of a watcher, "now to follow up on these guys and be sure there's no slip. If they should get wise there's nothing for us to do but cover the town ourselves with the extra run we've got at the shop. But the chances now are against our having to do it!"

At exactly forty-six minutes past three, as the sky over East Prescott was commencing to show faint streaks of dawn, a perspiring Slug Pickens, checking up on his bill-peddling cohorts, exclaimed with exultation as Fat Watson and Phil Stone, last of those unaccounted, put in a puffing appearance.

"Boy, what a job!" gasped Fat, "I'll bet I lost ten pounds. Darn near got a leg bitten off by a dog and tripped over someone's kiddie car. I'm lucky to be back alive!"

"That's nothing!" scoffed Rudie, "I fell off a porch, caught my neck on a clothesline cutting between houses, and sprained my ankle jumping a fence."

"And all for the glory of West Prescott!" laughed Chief Terror Slug. "Fellows, what I'd like to see is the faces of those Wildcats when they rub the peekaboos out of their eyes this morning and see what's been done while they slept!"

"Me, too!" echoed Fat, "they thought they were so cute—pulling that bill-peddling stunt on us! . . . Well, this is going to hurt them lots worse than they hurt us! And they won't have any time to get even! There'll be a line at the polls by the time they're up!"

"Yeah . . . but that's the time *we'll* be sleeping," said Slug. "Good thing there's no school to-day. I won't feel like getting up till around ten."

"I guess we could all stand to hit the hay," agreed Tom. "Well, I'll be seeing you fellows later in the day. We want to be in shape for the big celebration to-night!"

"You said it! . . . Top of the morning, old scout!"

And leg-weary Terrors, jubilant in the thoughts of a job well done, wended their separate ways homeward.

Blinds went up in the home of the Pickens' family at seven o'clock sharp, an hour after the polls had opened. This was half an hour before Mr. Pickens' regular time of rising but this Tuesday morning only happened once every two years. As it was, the raising of the blinds of windows looking out over the front porch did not seem to materially increase the amount of light.

"Dark day," observed Mr. Pickens, squinting from eyes which customarily depended upon glasses. "Certainly hope it don't rain. We want a big vote cast to-day."

Going mechanically to the front door, Mr. Pickens turned the lock and put his hand on the knob preparatory to opening it and reaching out for the morning paper. But as he released the catch the door, this morning, opened of its own volition and several bulging newsboys bags came toppling in, all but bowling an astounded and befuddled Mr. Pickens over.

"Well, upon my word! How extraordi-

nary!" he exclaimed, as he nursed a bruised knee and gazed through the door at a white pile of sacks which he could now see had also been stacked in front of his windows, "No wonder it's dark in here! . . . But what on earth? . . . Let me see! . . . Let me see!"

Stooping tremblingly, Mr. Pickens tore one of the envelopes from the sack nearest him and removed a folder.

"This can't be! . . ." he exclaimed, considerably aghast. "Why, last night I saw with my own eyes . . . Oh, good heavens! . . . Slug, come here! . . . Slug . . . wake up . . . Slug—you hear me? . . . Oh, *Slug!*"

In hands which now shook as of one with the palsy, Mr. Pickens stood in the middle of his living room, staring at an opened folder bearing headlines of his own creation.

TAXPAYERS—BEWARE!

From an upstairs bedroom a disheveled, pajama-clad figure appeared, leaning wide-eyed over the stair rail.

"What's the matter, Dad? . . . Gee whiz! . . . Take it easy! . . . What's up?"

The robed figure of Mrs. Pickens joined her

son, both naturally much concerned at the sudden inexplainable ravings of the head of the house.

"Frank!" called Mrs. Pickens, "don't shout! The neighbors! . . . What's happened?"

Slug came racing down the stairs in time to help his father to a chair.

"Shall I get you a glass of water?" asked Mrs. Pickens, nervously.

But Mr. Pickens waved her aside and pointed toward the front door, at the same time handing his son the folder.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded, "one of your jokes? . . . This is serious, young man—serious!"

Slug's face went white. He looked toward the front door and started. Then he hurried to the sacks on the floor and grabbed out handfuls of envelopes, tearing folders from the inside and glancing at them. All were the same: "*Taxpayers—Beware!*"

"Dad!" he cried, in an agony of despair, "I'm dizzy! . . . We certainly peddled these last night! . . . Worked our heads off! . . . Didn't get in till almost four!"

Mr. Pickens slumped dejectedly in his chair.

"You've been tricked!" he moaned, "you must have peddled something else. Oh, this may ruin us! . . . My broadsides! . . . Our biggest wad of ammunition . . . all out on the front porch! . . . Did you have any of the bills you put out left over?"

Slug nodded, lump in his throat, and ran to a corner where he had tossed his discarded sack. Diving into it he pulled forth a white envelope, the very duplicate of the ones which lay on the floor. And from this envelope he took a folder which, to all intents and purposes, while folded, appeared exactly the same. He held it a moment as he and his father exchanged fearsome glances.

"Open it!" ordered the senior Pickens, "let's know the worst!"

Slug did as directed and his jaw dropped at what he saw.

"It's a poem!" he exclaimed, bewilderedly, and read, "'A Crying Shame'—With Apologies to Barbara Frietchie!"

"What nonsense!" cried Mr. Pickens, "bring it here! Let's see it!"

And then commenced a reading interjected

with comments which made the air of the Pickens' household a distinctive shade of blue.

"Tommyrot!" Mr. Pickens ended up, "Sheer tommyrot! And to think you boys stayed up practically all night delivering this drivel to Prescott homes! . . . I'd give a lot to know the author of this! . . . I'd make him sweat!"

"Well, you can bet the Wildcats were behind the switching of those sacks!" accused Slug. "Naturally I never thought to look at the folders after . . ."

"It's one of the worst outrages ever perpetrated in the town of Prescott!" raged Mr. Pickens, "and we shall have redress through the courts!"

"But what can be done about it?" asked Mrs. Pickens, quaintly. "They haven't destroyed your property? . . . They've simply misplaced it and because you didn't discover . . ."

"Oh, Mother, let me handle this—please!" protested Mr. Pickens. "I must get Judge Quackenberry on the phone at once! . . . This is a frightful mess . . . frightful! . . . I don't know what may come of it!"

While the roof was being raised at the Pick-

ens' home, beneath the roofs of other Prescott homes, both East and West, loud laughter was ringing.

"Never read anything so funny!" said one voter.

"It's a riot!" exclaimed another, "whoever thought that up was certainly clever. Paints a real picture of conditions, too!"

The first inclination everywhere was to laugh at the parody entitled, "A Crying Shame," but afterwards, inevitably came the reaction which the campaign committee of East Prescott had desired. Voters decided, on reflection, that the poem wasn't so funny after all. It carried a sting in it. Those last two lines:

"Honor to those who change the place
And save Prescott from lasting disgrace!"

The way to change the location of the dumping grounds was to vote for a new order of things in Prescott—not East or West Prescott —but *Prescott!* Come to really think of it—it was high time something was being done about "the mounds unsightly to the eye." It was nothing of which to be proud—a place where "visitors hold their very noses." The

author of this verse was right. East and West should "join hands to beautify the river lands. . . ."

And at seven o'clock in the evening of election day, the *Morning Blade* broke all precedents by bringing out an extra, carrying the smashing headlines:

EAST SIDE CANDIDATES WIN!
OLD POLITICAL RULE BROKEN!

On receipt of the news, fellow Wildcats, gathered at their clubhouse, touched off a huge pile of boxes and boards which sent their flames scorching skyward for all West Prescott to behold.

"Fellows!" spoke Sandy, when called upon for a speech, "I have nothing to say except . . . asking your forgiveness . . . I'd like permission to recite one more verse!"

"*Go ahead!*" roared the crowd.

And Sandy, doffing his cap, responded with a seriousness which had all his listeners guessing.

"All day long up every street,
Sounded the tread of voters' feet—
All day long the ballots grew . . .
Oh, Barbara Frietchie—we thank *you!*"

CHAPTER XIII

THE BLOW-UP!

THE night that the new city councilmen took their places in the Council Chamber at City Hall, a capacity crowd of East and West Prescott citizens was on hand to see the fire works. But the citizens were pleasantly disappointed. They saw, instead, a most affable Mr. Jordan P. Sanderson, shaking hands and making most cordial advances to west side members of the council who had been expected to do everything but draw daggers at the very sight of members from across the river. Councilmen Overman and Holliday were only slightly less warm in their greeting of the west side aldermen with whom they were to serve, and their backwardness was attributed to a natural timidity before such an audience.

"For new politicians those East Prescott men are sure up to old tricks," voiced a spectator. "Won't be long, at this rate, before they'll have at least one of our west side coun-

cilmen over on their side and then watch 'em put that river improvement through."

The observation was an exceedingly keen one for, through rubbing shoulders at several meetings, the representatives of East and West Prescott found they had much more in common than they had permitted themselves to think. The red letter day for East Prescott then speedily arrived with the passing of an ordinance calling for the removal of the old dump grounds and the building of an adequate incinerator plant. The vote on the ordinance was five for and two against, it was true, but the one vote more than was actually needed was considered a great step toward the achievement of absolute accord on both sides of the river.

"But *we're* off the Wildcats for life!" denounced Slug, unable to forget the humiliating manner in which the Terrors had been tricked on election eve. "They don't get a break from us from now on!"

"I'll say not!" declared Fat. "We stand together on that!"

And fellow Terrors vigorously agreed, their thoughts returning now to baseball and the friction existing on the team which had once

more become highly inflamed. It was the week before the big game with Redfield and intense excitement prevailed.

School teams throughout the state were now willing to concede that Prescott High this season possessed a practically unbeatable nine. One after another of them, with the exception of Morton Tech, had gone down before Slim Becker's masterful pitching, timely hitting—especially by Slug Pickens and Sandy Sanderson—and uniformly good fielding.

"You fellows ought to have a good chance of taking Redfield this year," different opponents had said to Prescott team members during the season.

With teams that had also played Redfield, Prescott had taken a savage delight in trying to defeat them by a larger score as forewarning to their bitterest enemy and staunchest foe. But Redfield, always noted for the turning out of powerful baseball teams, went unconcernedly on its way, bowling over opposing nines with machine-like regularity.

"Those Redfield teams aren't human," protested a Prescott fan, in comparing season's

records. "They make too much of a business of playing this game. And what makes it tougher is having to tackle 'em on their own diamond this year! Me prophesy the outcome? Not on your funny tintype!"

"Listen, bunch," said Hoop to a group of Wildcats during Monday recess between classes, "I don't want Sandy to hear this or he wouldn't stand for it. But the time's come for me to spring my big idea . . ."

"Let her flicker!" invited Pink, "we're with you before you start."

Hoop grinned. "I knew you would be—especially when I tell you this idea's calculated to get even with Clint Evers for all the things he's been putting in the paper on us!"

"Oh, boy!" exploded Sly, "louder and more of it!"

"The trouble with Sandy," went on Hoop, "the stuff he's been having us pull is all too tame. But here's a chance to put something big over without a comeback!"

"For Pete's sake—what is it?"

"Don't keep us biting finger nails!"

Hoop looked about cautiously, then drew several folded sheets of yellow copy paper from

his pocket. The sheets contained the imprint of the *Prescott Morning Blade.*

"What you doing with those?" questioned Pink, puzzled.

Hoop winked. "I've turned reporter," he replied, "Sandy's played great ball all season . . . deserves a good write-up . . . and he's going to get it."

"But Clint's the only one who's authorized to write for the *Blade,*" protested Dan. "How you going to . . ."

"Perfectly simple!" broke in Hoop, "Clint's already written the story. At least—here it is—on paper supplied him by the *Blade*—taken from his desk."

Fellow Wildcats gasped.

"I've watched Clint mighty close these past weeks," continued Hoop, "and I know every move he makes. He writes his feature stories for the Wednesday midweek sport edition over the week-end and takes 'em to school on Monday so he can deliver 'em to the paper as soon as classes are over in the afternoon. These stories are always slipped in an envelope which is fastened with an elastic band . . . and Clint carries this envelope in the right outside pocket

of his topcoat which hangs in Hall 'C' . . ."

"Hoop!" exclaimed Pink, "I have to hand it to you—your brain cells sure have functioned!"

"Better wait till we see how things work out," warned Hoop. "It won't be any trick at all to swap this story for the one in Clint's envelope. But after that's done we'll have to pull wishbones that Clint turns in his stories without giving 'em another going over!"

"Wow! And if he does . . . and your story on Sandy comes out in Wednesday morning's *Blade!*" anticipated Sly, "It'll . . ."

". . . send the Terrors sky high!" finished Hoop.

"And probably put them off their game against Redfield!" surmised Pink. "Believe me, fellows, if Redfield beats us this year, those Terrors aren't going to hang the blame for the defeat on us!"

Wednesday morning early, as folded copies of the *Prescott Morning Blade* banged against doors of Wildcat team members in the "know" on Hoop Holliday's attempted putting through of a feature article on Sandy Sanderson, half-clothed forms crept to doors and reached out bare arms for the paper, shaking it eagerly

open and turning at once for the sport page to see if the stunt had worked. There were exclamations of unbounded joy the moment the sport page was reached, for the story in question was not only there—it had been given the number one column with feature headlines!

SANDY SANDERSON STAR
THIS YEAR'S BALL TEAM

All-Around Play Of New Third
Sacker Aid in Victory String

Slug Pickens' Shift To
Shortstop Wise Move

Early in the season there were some who openly questioned Coach Potter's choice of Sandy Sanderson over Slug Pickens at third but now, with only the big Redfield game remaining to be played, all Prescott is warmly endorsing the wisdom of the move which shifted Slug to shortstop and entrusted his old position to the new third base candidate—Sandy Sanderson . . . for Sandy has made good at this difficult corner—and *how!*

The article went on to review Sandy's outstanding plays of the season together with the mention of games in which his timely hitting

had brought victories, and—in summing up, declared him to be the best third baseman ever to represent Prescott High, concluding with a short paragraph which—in so far as West Siders were concerned—added grievous insult to injury.

"Other team members who have flashed consistently good ball throughout the season are Catcher Pink Barringer, Second Baseman Hoop Holliday, and Right Fielder Sly Cooley. These men are expected to give a good account of themselves in the final game for their school Saturday."

This item was undeniably another "shot heard 'round the town." Echoes of it volleyed and thundered the moment dazed Terrors were able to get their bearings.

"Where's Clint?" shouted the enraged Slug Pickens. "He'll sure pay for this!"

And when the supposedly offending Clint Evers, school reporter, was located by Terrors all but ready to tear him limb from limb, the mystery of the feature item praising Sandy Sanderson and fellow Wildcats was increased

by Clint's bewildered declaration: "Honest, guys . . . I don't know how it happened. All I know is—I didn't write it!"

Clint had rushed to the news office the instant the story was called to his attention and had raised a tremendous howl until a disgruntled editor, jumping on the foreman of the composing room, got hold the original copy the accredited Mr. Evers had turned in and, finding it contained the condemned story, forthwith proceeded to eject the protesting young man through the outer door of the *Prescott Morning Blade* press rooms, where he was invited to cool off before sticking his head inside again.

And shortly thereafter, as this same greatly perplexed and agitated chronicler of school events was walking practically unseeingly down the street, wondering how he could explain this calamity in print to fellow Terrors, he had run face to face into—of all undesirable people—Sandy Sanderson! For a dizzy second Clint had stared at Prescott's third baseman in open-mouthed and throat-palpitating amazement.

"You!" he finally managed, noting at the

same time that the leader of the Wildcats was carrying a copy of the *Morning Blade* and was smiling agreeably upon him.

"Clint," said Sandy, a bit awkwardly but with evident sincerity, "mighty decent of you to write this about me . . . but . . . I . . . er . . . think you put it on pretty thick. Just the same, I . . ."

"Hey!" roared Clint, running a finger underneath his collar, "wait a minute! Hold on! You know darned well I wouldn't write that about you! Some nerve you birds have! Some nerve! But we'll get even! Mark my words—I don't know how you did it but *we'll get even!*"

With this, even though the despised East Sider now appeared as greatly surprised as Clint had been, the reporter who ordinarily recorded school events through West Side eyes, had rushed off, leaving the star third baseman like a dose of poison.

Meanwhile fellow Wildcats, meeting guardedly that their wild elation might be concealed from suspicious Terrors, proclaimed Hoop Holliday the eighth wonder of the East Side, accompanying their proclamations with hearty

slaps on the back which brought from him the exclamation: "Gosh! I don't see where I gain by this! I'm getting beaten up by my own gang for doing something to the Terrors about as bad as the Terrors would beat me up if they knew I was to blame!"

In the midst of the celebrating, quite unmindful that their leader was not present, fellow Wildcats were suddenly somewhat sobered by Sly's observation: "Here comes Sandy this moment!"

The Chief Wildcat had obviously been on the hunt for his followers whom he now surmised with having put over something on the Terrors without his knowledge.

"Hello, Sandy," greeted Pink, "we were just wondering where you were. Congratulations! Some story Clint gave you!"

Several Wildcats laughed at this but the remark brought no answering smile from their approaching leader.

"Just as I figured!" whispered Hoop, "he's sore over this . . . but he'll get over it. Boy, it was the richest . . ."

"Having a good time?" was Sandy's dry

salutation as he reached the bunch, "Which one of you deserves the credit?"

There was a moment's silence as Wildcats looked at one another testily.

"Credit—for what?" parried Sly.

"You know what!" snapped Sandy, "That story on me!"

"Well . . . er . . . it was Hoop's idea!" replied Pink, a bit uneasily.

"Yeah," admitted Hoop, as he felt Sandy's eyes upon him. "You see—we knew you'd be too modest to let us do it if we put you wise . . . and you really had a story like that coming to you. Besides—not considering yourself —you'll have to agree it's one whale of a joke on the Terrors!"

"But you fellows didn't stop to think what light it would put me in, did you?" blazed Sandy. "As Wildcat leader the Terrors are bound to think I engineered this! They won't believe anything else . . . and it makes me look bad. I don't thank you fellows for this stunt at all—and, as far as I'm concerned—I'm on my own from now on!"

"Aw, Sandy—be a sport!" pleaded Hoop.

"Be a sport!" fired the resigning leader, "you fellows don't know the true meaning of sport. I told you that when you ragged the Terrors about four of us making the team. I gave you another chance then to fight clean but you're up to old stuff again. I can see it now—the East Side's just as bad as the West. You're not rivals for the fun of being rivals—you're just cheap little backbiters!"

And with this mighty broadside, Sandy Sanderson who had done more than anyone else to lift the brow-beaten Wildcats up to a place of new respect in the eyes of the Terrors, walked away from his stunned followers.

In the locker room before practice that afternoon fireworks flew in all directions but most of the heated display centered about one Sandy Sanderson who just as heatedly denied to the Terrors any part in the affair which had the whole town buzzing.

"I didn't know a thing about this," he reiterated, "or you can bet it wouldn't have happened!"

"Bunk!" said Slug. "You like it—and why shouldn't you, since it plays you to the skies?"

Sandy's face flushed. "I *don't* like it—and to prove that I don't—I'm no longer a Wildcat! I'm not anything! . . ."

"*What?*" gasped Slug and other Terrors, unbelievingly.

"Yes, and what's more," continued Sandy, "you Terrors and Wildcats ought to have your heads bumped together! I've lived in a few towns and I don't mind telling you—the spirit here is the poorest of any burg I've been in! No wonder you haven't ever won a big game! No wonder you're always blaming the other fellow! You guys are never really going to get anywhere . . . and I only hope my folks pick up and move out of this good-for-nothing place!"

Terror and Wildcat looked at one another askance during this tirade. Never had anyone addressed them either singly or collectively in this manner and gotten away with it. And Sandy wasn't just attacking one side of town—he was including plenty of territory.

"We'll show you!" denounced Slug, with a flashing glance at bulging-jawed Wildcats.

"I'll say we'll show him!" echoed Hoop Holliday. "We never won our big game, eh?

You know what he called us, Slug? 'Poor sports!' 'Cheap backbiters!' "

"That so?" retorted the Chief Terror. "Well, what's he but an outsider? . . . Says he's lived in a *few* towns. You know what I bet? I bet those towns wouldn't let him stay soon as they got wise to him. I called him a 'hit and run' baby once and that's just what he is!"

" 'Spineless,' you mean!" corrected Terror Fat Watson.

"You said it!" agreed Wildcat Pink Barringer, "He won't stand up for anything. We've found that out. He doesn't belong here!"

The fellow who had brought this torrential storm upon his head, snapped shut his locker.

"Don't worry," he said, quietly, "I'm not going to stay. I'm through with you guys and through with the team."

The announcement came as an additional thunderbolt.

"Oh, so you're a quitter, too!" jeered Slug Pickens, "leave us in the lurch just before the big game? . . . Well, let me tell you something, Horace—that's his real name, fellows—

Horace! . . . There's never been a Terror or a Wildcat that's quit under fire . . . no matter how much we've been against each other. Isn't that right, gang?"

"Yea!" answered Wildcats and Terrors together.

The outcast turned, hands on hips, apparently reconsidering.

"All right," he decided, grimly, "you win! I'm sick of the bunch of you but I'll stick—till this game's over!"

Rumors of a blow-up on the Prescott High team reached Redfield supporters with the first arrival of Prescott followers early Saturday morning and great was the rejoicing therein, for the Prescott nine had been feared much more than Redfield had cared to let Prescott know. The feeling had somehow gotten around that this season Prescott had the best chance, thus far, of upsetting her traditional foe. This feeling was based on reports of Redfield scouts who had seen the Prescott team in action.

"Our pitcher, Ace Hudkins, will want to be 'hot' when he takes the mound," was the scouts' observation, "because those Prescott

boys pack a batting wallop and their pitcher, Slim Becker, isn't going to give us too many runs to work on."

All of which indicated—if the dopesters were right—a nip-and-tuck battle!

There was nothing jocular about the attitude of the Prescott High squad as it left the two busses which transported it to Redfield's ball park and ambled slowly up the cinder path to the Field House. The faces of team members were set with a sober intensity and few gave so much as a glance of recognition to the several score of home-town rooters who lined the path and shouted words of cheer. It was an ideal, sunny day for the game—sunny, at present, for both Redfield and Prescott . . . and no good reason, as yet, why anyone should be glum. But the only one of the players who was seen to smile was Sandy Sanderson who brought up the rear, quite apart from the main body of his fellows. Nor did he make any effort to catch up to them, preferring to linger along the way, exchanging repartee with various ones who called to him.

"Gosh! Most of our guys look like they're

going to a funeral!" remarked a Prescott follower, looking after the squad.

"Maybe they are!" rejoined another, wittily, "Redfield's!"

"If they don't show more life than that, it'll be theirs!" answered the first supporter. "Say—that must have been some row those Terrors and Wildcats had! Wish I knew what it was all about. Does anybody?"

"Guess not," vounteered another, "except that everybody's sore at something."

"But Sandy doesn't seem to be affected any," observed still another.

"Well, you could hardly expect him to be," explained someone. "He hasn't really lived here long enough to get the 'feel' of the town. If he'd been a dyed-in-the-wool Wildcat or Terror he'd probably be chewing tenpenny nails himself!"

Wily old Coach Potter, the only one outside team members having an exact inkling of what was happening, took Sandy aside as he entered the Field House and talked to him earnestly in the shielded nook of a corridor. What was

said during this brief conference was strictly "nobody's business" but when Sandy entered the dressing room, the smile he had so jauntily displayed a few minutes previously was gone. Wildcats and Terrors glanced at him disdainfully as they dressed.

"Better snap it up in there!" said Captain Slug Pickens, when Prescott's third baseman showed traces of extreme listlessness, "we're late getting out now. Only have about twenty minutes warm up before the game."

"That's plenty!" rejoined Sandy, leaning back against a locker, 'I don't need much practice anyway."

"Listen to that, will you?" snorted Hoop, "the guy thinks he's good!"

"He *knows* he's good!" cut in Terror Phil Stone, bitingly. "Didn't that feature article he wrote about himself say so?"

"Well, we'll see how good Mister High Hat is to-day," commented Slug, pointedly, drawing his bats from the bag. "Came here to show us how to play baseball. Beat me out for third—to hear him tell it."

"He *did* beat you out for third," said a voice, and team members started in surprise

" HE *DID* BEAT YOU OUT FOR THIRD," SAID A VOICE, AS COACH POTTER STEPPED AMONG THEM.

as Coach Potter stepped among them. Slug Pickens glared.

"Whoever wrote that article, wrote the truth," insisted the Coach, "Sandy made me shift you to short. You've played bang-up ball there, too . . . but the trouble with you is—you've never been willing to give another man credit. Now, all you fellows—cut out this small stuff and let's see a ball team take the field instead of a bunch of *backbiting* individuals!"

Sandy's grin came back with *interest.* He reached for his uniform and commenced dressing. Coach Potter wheeled and walked out.

"*Backbiting!*" kidded the fellow who was on the "outs" with his teammates. "You hear that? From the Coach, too! Now will you guys be good?"

"Oh, for cryin' out loud!" stormed Slug, "come on, gang! This fresh boy's riding for a fall and something tells me it's coming in this game!"

"Can you imagine Coach taking Sandy's side?" raved Terror Tom Perry, when they had gotten out of hearing.

"Say, we'll show you up so bad to-day he won't have a leg to stand on!" vowed Pink. "You're the best ball player that ever took a Prescott diamond, Slug—and even us East Siders have to hand you that!"

"Well," said Slug, pleased, "I just haven't been able to see Sandy—not as a world beater anyway—and I still can't figure that third baseman business! . . ."

"Aw, what do you care?" broke in Sly.

"I'll make Coach eat those words!" declared Prescott's captain. "Wait till you guys see me out there to-day!"

CHAPTER XIV

NO QUARTER ASKED

THE heat on Redfield's sun-baked diamond this historic afternoon was not all supplied by Old Sol for there was also an internal heat which flowed all unseeingly through the veins of Prescott team members, being reflected only by looks of set determination.

"Those fellows act as though they mean business," was the observation which their demeanor provoked from Redfield supporters who watched the visiting nine go through an unusually snappy, even vicious warm up. And Redfield team members rubbed their chins reflectively as their opponents' short practice was wound up by a whizzing throwing of the ball about the infield concluded by the catcher steaming the ball on a line down to the third baseman who clung to the horsehide even though the force of it turned him half around.

"Wow! I'd hated to have been on the receiv-

ing end of that!" laughed a spectator, as Prescott's third baseman was seen to remove his glove and tenderly massage a reddened palm.

On the bench Coach Potter had a sharp reprimand ready for Pink Barringer who had won the silent plaudits of his team mates by the sizzling peg which Sandy had just been able to hold.

"Ought to 'ave known better than that," the Coach scolded. "Might have put Sandy's hand out of commission!"

"Too bad about that guy's hand," Pink said under his breath.

"Since when have you become Coach's pet?" taunted Slug as Prescott's third baseman stopped by the water jug to get a drink.

Sandy's only answer was a grin which, under the circumstances, was answer enough. Slug figuratively burned up.

"How I hate that bird!" he said, in a low tone to Wildcat Hoop.

"Me, too!" agreed Prescott's second baseman, "he's got more brass . . ."

"Batteries for to-day's game!" bawled the voice of the umpire. "For Prescott . . ."

And two minutes later Prescott team mem-

bers were reaching for bats and leaning forward on the bench, eyes centered on the diamond, fighting mad.

"Get on, Sly!" they begged, as right fielder Cooley, first up, toed the plate. "Start this thing off right!"

Sly made a gallant effort, swinging hard on the first pitched ball and bringing an impulsive cheer from Prescott fans as he drove the ball far to center. The Redfield center fielder got under it, however, after a pretty run, and the home crowd settled back with sighs of relief.

"One, two, three!" sang the Redfield catcher. "Number two, men!"

And number "two" it was, Phil Stone, Prescott first sacker, going out on a hard hit grounder to short which was relayed to first with yards to spare. Center fielder Tom Perry made the third out on a little pop up back of third . . . and Prescott regulars took the field on the run for Redfield's half of the inning.

Ace Hudkins, Redfield's pitching hope, was greeted with enthusiastic shouts as he came in from off the mound after having so promptly disposed of the first three men on Prescott's batting order.

"Guess you're in your stride to-day!" cried one admirer.

"Only twenty-four more and you'll have a no-hit game!" yelled a wit.

Some minutes later Prescott rooters were just as jubilantly heaping praise upon their pitching star—Slim Becker—for Redfield's lead-off batters were as easily set down.

"A tooth for a tooth so far!" said someone. And a murmur went through the stands as Slug Pickens, Prescott captain and heavy hitter, strode to the plate to start the second inning. He was trailed by Sandy Sanderson, third baseman, who knelt off to one side, leaning on his bat, awaiting his time up.

"All right, Slug! Give her a ride!" begged his team mates.

Ace Hudkins, regarding Slug as a worthy foeman, worked craftily, picking the corners. The count went to three and two.

"Here's the big one, Slug!"

"Good-by, ball!"

The sphere left Ace's hand—a blurring streak. Slug took a step forward to meet it. The ball was coming directly over, waist high and on the outside. But, as Slug timed it, and

swung, it curved down and out . . . and Slug's bat connected with nothing but warm summer air while the white streak ended a smacking thump in the catcher's mitt.

"Lose it?" chided the Redfield catcher, as the home crowd howled, and the catcher held the ball up for Prescott's star batter to see as he crossed the plate toward the bench, hurling his bat ahead of him.

"Tough luck!" said Sandy, next up, as Slug and he passed.

Slug looked daggers.

"You backbiter!" Sandy added, and continued to the plate.

Dropping down on the bench, Prescott High's team captain restrained his feelings with difficulty. A moment later he was involuntarily on his feet, choking back a shout of joy as the fellow who had so scathingly denounced his team mates, connected for a screaming drive between right and center fields which bounced back off the fence for a fine two-base hit.

"Can you beat that?" mumbled Slug, more to himself than anyone else. "That boob gets the first hit of the game!"

Squatting on second base Sandy could not

resist a triumphant wave of his hand toward the Prescott bench.

"Come on, Hoop!" he called, as his former fellow Wildcat approached the plate. "Bring me in!"

Slug groaned. "We may need the run," he said, behind his hand to Phil Stone, "but if that guy scores we'll never hear the end of it!"

With mixed emotions, Prescott's captain looked on as Ace Hudkins threw two balls and a strike, then stiffened as Hoop's bat flashed at the next offering and shot a clean single through the infield, scoring Sandy standing up.

"Hooray, Wildcats!" shouted a Prescott East Sider.

But Slug's thoughts were not on factional strife. He looked away as Prescott's third baseman came trotting to the bench with the large Prescott High crowd of rooters giving him a great hand.

"Fine work, Sandy," complimented the Coach, moving over to permit him a seat beside him. "That's giving Slim an early lead to work on!"

"Rats!" muttered Slug, and arose from the bench, as left fielder Rudie Rudolph hit into a

double play, ending Prescott's half of the inning.

Bingo Nelson, Redfield's clean-up hitter, was first at bat for his team. The home fans gave him a tremendous welcoming, pointing to the fence and urging him to tie the score with one of his out-of-the-park clouts. Bingo grinned, shrugged his shoulders, and shuffled to the plate, gazing out over the diamond as though picking a likely spot to hit the ball. He was a right-handed batter and the Prescott infield immediately shifted slightly toward the left side of the field.

"They all look alike to you, Slim!" encouraged Prescott team members. "Get the big boy first!"

Slim nodded and started to work on Redfield's heavy hitter. Bingo swung on the first pitch and turned half-around, hitting a high foul which disappeared over the grand-stand roof.

"You got the distance, Bingo—but the wrong direction!" laughed a spectator.

Catcher Pink Barringer took a brand new ball from the umpire and shook his head cautiously at Slim as he threw the ball out. This

Bingo person must not be given a good pitch to hit at or he was apt to lose balls in all directions. The next two pitches were teasers, just on the outside, but Bingo had too good an eye to bite.

"You got to get 'em in there for him!" called a Redfield coacher.

Slim wound up slowly and released the ball with a burst of speed.

Bingo!

The familiar swishing and crack of the bat so characteristic of Redfield's hitting star . . . and Prescott's third baseman lunged frantically toward his base as the ball screamed past on a low line, kicking up a puff of dust as it struck just inside the foul line some twenty feet beyond the infield!

"What a hit!" gasped a rooter as Bingo brought up on second with the ball being hurriedly relayed in to third by left fielder Rudie Rudolph.

"He always smacks 'em down through third!" said another. "Broke a baseman's leg in the Norris game."

"All even so far!" jollied a Redfield fan, "Each side's hit a two bagger. Let's go, gang! Tie this game right here!"

But Slim Becker, pitching cautiously, forced the next batter out on a foul to catcher. The second went down, second to first while Bingo advanced to third on the out, and the third batsman flied to Sly Cooley in right field who made a dashing run and catch.

"Great stuff!" yelled the Prescott stands. "We're still better than they are!"

The third inning passed scoreless, neither team being able to get a man on base. Prescott likewise failed to solve pitcher Ace Hudkins in their half of the fourth. But Redfield, in her half, started trouble through a base on balls and a scratch two bagger which placed men on second and third with none out and Bingo Nelson up.

"Oh! Oh! It won't be long now!" raved Redfield. "Give the old apple a ride, Bingo!"

Captain Slug Pickens, scowling deeply, moved over toward his third baseman.

"Watch 'em up in there!" he called to Sandy. "He's liable to drive one at you!"

Sandy nodded. It was a tense moment for Prescott and the whole infield was on its toes. Agony was increased as Slim Becker pitched the count to three and two. Bingo then pro-

ceeded to click off three tremendous fouls, one of which disappeared over the left field fence, a foul by barely a foot.

"Whew!" breathed a Prescott follower, "if that guy ever straightens one! . . . It might be wiser to pass him!"

Bingo!

Redfield's heavy hitter had caught one at last—almost the same sort of drive as his previous hit except that it was more inside the base line and lower—whizzing directly at the third baseman! Traveling at lightning speed, the ball struck the diamond almost at Sandy's feet and took a wicked bound, flying up and cracking Prescott's third sacker just over the eye, the force of the drive toppling him upon his back with the ball itself rolling to the side. Things happened crazily and swiftly after that. Shortstop Slug Pickens, backing up, gave chase to the ball, pegging it home as the second pair of feet clattered over the plate and Bingo Nelson steamed into second base for his second two base wallop of the game. The Redfield crowd went wild.

Score—Redfield, 2; Prescott, 1.

"Nobody out and nobody going to get out!" shouted a fan.

"I told you he was liable to hit one at you!" blazed Slug, approaching Sandy who had gotten shakily to his feet, hand to his right eye. "And you let it get through you! Some player, you are! That may cost us the game!"

Then Slug noticed a thin streak of blood trickling through Sandy's fingers and turned toward the bench, beckoning to the Coach. The field was in a terrific uproar, comment going the rounds on Bingo's tremendous driving force.

"You could hear that ball hit his head clear over here!" cried an excited rooter. "That boy's hurt!"

The umpire called the game while first aid was given the injured player, Bingo Nelson leaving his base to extend his sympathy. Examination revealed a gash above the eye and a puffy swelling. Coach Potter summoned Dan Overman, utility infielder, from the bench.

"Dan, take Sandy's place," he directed.

But Sandy, being attended by Trainer Piggy Doyle, at once registered protest.

"No, Coach! Don't take me out, please! I'll

be all right soon as this eye's taped. I can see okay!"

"You don't know what you're talking about!" said Captain Pickens, taking his arm and moving to help Sandy off the diamond.

"Let go of me!" demanded Prescott's third baseman, jerking his arm free. "Honest, Coach, I. . . ."

Coach Potter hesitated.

"I'd go out if I were you," counseled Hoop, after a glance at the injury.

"There she be!" said Trainer Doyle as he completed the dressing by plastering on a strip of tape which ran across Sandy's forehead and over his right ear. "He don't look so handsome but it fixes him up!"

"All right, Sandy," decided the Coach. "You stay in!"

Prescott's third baseman beamed his thanks and reached down to pick up his glove. A round of applause burst from the stands and Slug Pickens, curiously regarding the fellow he held in contempt, moved back to his position, shaking his head uncertainly.

"Coach sure favors that baby!" he told himself, bitterly.

Attempting the "hit and run," figuring that Prescott was still upset from the marring incident, the next Redfield batter drove sharply to short but Slug trapped the ball and caught the mighty Bingo Nelson between bases. He was finally run down by Sandy who took a toss from Slug and chased Bingo back toward second, tagging him. The spectacle of Prescott's injured third sacker taking such a prominent part in the very next play brought additional cheers from the stands.

"Attaboy, Sandy!" complimented Slim, somewhat relieved. There was one man down now and a runner on first by virtue of a fielder's choice and it appeared that the backbone of Redfield's furious rally had been broken.

"If that bird doesn't get more lucky breaks than any guy I ever saw!" Slug mumbled grudgingly.

Slim, bearing down, struck out the next two batters to end the inning and the Prescott team trotted off the field, everyone anxious to take more of a look at their fellow team mate's eye.

"Still swelling," observed Sly Cooley. "Better put some cold water on it."

"Can't just now, I'm first up!" said Sandy

and, grabbing a bat, hurried off to the plate. He did not hesitate an instant.

"I always said that boy had nerve," breathed Pink, looking after him. "Have to hand him that much anyway."

"Nerve!" repeated Slug, "how do you know he isn't grand standing? That eye may look lots worse than it really is!"

And when Sandy returned to the bench, a strike-out victim, Prescott's team captain nudged Pink with the whispered comment, "See that? He's gone to pieces. That little bump's got his goat."

"I'd hardly say that," was Pink's retort. "You struck out and you didn't even have a bump for an alibi!"

Slug's face reddened.

The inning ended scoreless for both sides and Prescott went into the first of the sixth, still a run behind. Ace Hudkins was twirling beautiful ball, mowing the Prescott batters down almost as fast as they came up. The sixth inning also passed uneventfully and Prescott fans commenced growing uneasy.

"Anything can happen yet!" declared an optimist.

"But it *isn't* happening!" said a pessimist, dolefully.

And, what was often extolled as the "lucky seventh" ended disastrously for Prescott, a fast double play killing chances for at least a tying score.

"Come on, men, let's put this game on ice!" said the Redfield coach as his team came in for its half of the seventh.

Redfield responded with one out, a three-base hit followed by a two-base clout sending a run across.

"Three to one!" groaned a Prescott rooter. "We're slipping!"

More groans as the next batter hit sharply to pitcher and Slim momentarily fumbled, Hoop coming in fast for the ball, the hitter reaching first in safety and the runner on second going down to third.

"The old balloon ascension!" yelled a Redfield rooter, gleefully. "You guys are going up, up, up!"

And so it looked, for a hard drive which Hoop was barely able to knock down was converted into an out at first though the runner from third scored.

"A man on second and look who's up!" shrieked a fan.

"Bingo Nelson!" moaned a Prescott supporter. "Oh, boy—this game's going to be a rout!"

"Walk him!" begged someone.

"Two out!" steadied Catcher Pink Barringer, shaking his fist at Slim on the mound. "We'll get this home-town idol for you! He's had a lot of horseshoes to-day!"

"Ho! Ho!" chortled a Redfield rooster. "Bingo's out for a perfect batting average this afternoon. Try stopping him!"

And smack! First ball pitched! Right on the nose again and aimed in the same uncanny direction though further in on the diamond . . . a smartly rolling drive between third and short but nearer third. With the crack of the bat, Prescott's tape-faced third baseman was in motion. He darted into the path of the ball, stooping to make the play when—unaccountably—apparently hitting some pebble or uneven spot on the diamond, the ball took a high bound and shot over his shoulder. Sandy sank dejectedly to one knee and turned to look over his shoulder as Redfields' base runner dashed past,

tagging the third-base bag on the inside and racing for home. But Captain Slug Pickens, having edged toward third before the hit, was in motion toward the drive with Sandy and had just reached a point behind the third sacker when the ball took its unexpected hop. Startled, he made a frenzied barehanded grab for it as it passed and picked it out of the air on his finger tips. Steadying himself he saw that there was still a chance of cutting the flashing Bingo down at first and, calling on every ounce of throwing strength he possessed, he hurled the ball on a whizzing line to Phil Stone who strained forward from the first-base sack to receive it.

"Batter out!" thumbed the umps.

And Prescott rooters went deservedly delirious.

"What a play!" they roared. "Saved another run easy!"

The astounded Bingo, having glimpsed the ball bounding past the third baseman, turned to protest with the umpire, unable to figure where the ball had come from. He shook his head unbelievingly as he took the field.

"Wonderful!" cried Sandy, slapping Slug joyfully.

"Good thing for you I got it," was the team captain's answer. "What's the matter—you afraid of it?"

Prescott's third sacker lapsed into silence.

Faced with a three-run handicap, Prescott's gloom was increased as Ace Hudkins baffled the best efforts of her three batters and sent them back to the bench, dragging their bats in the dust.

Grimly the Prescott team took the field resolved that Redfield would not add to her advantage and, literally "pitching his head off," Slim Becker did not permit a hit beyond the infield, Redfield's three batters being easily retired at first.

"Slim, old boy!" said Slug, putting his arm about Slim's shoulders, "you've sure done your part but we've fallen down on you. Just the same—this ball game isn't over yet!"

Slim shook his head despondently.

"We've got the same number of hits as they did," he answered. "Trouble is, Redfield bunched hits on me!"

"Only three more!" broadcast the Redfield catcher, as the home team took the field for the first of the ninth. "It won't be long now!"

"Four to one!" said a Prescott fan, viewing the score board, glumly. "Not a chance!"

"Pink, you're first up!" called Coach Potter. "This is the time you hit, boy!"

"Come on, Wildcat!" yelled an East Sider. "You Wildcats made our only run. See what you can do again!"

Pink fouled two, let two go by, and then dropped a looping fly just over second base which three fielders almost bumped heads trying to reach.

"That's placing 'em!" laughed a spectator.

"All right, Dan," directed Coach Potter. "You're batting in place of Slim."

Dan Overman, substitute infielder, leaped to his feet and selected his bat, rushing toward the plate.

"Another Wildcat!" cried the same East Sider. "Trot 'em out! They're the Terrors to-day!"

Ace Hudkins, who had truly been a pitching "ace" in this season's biggest game, viewed Prescott's small uprising as no cause for alarm. He grinned reassuringly as the pinch hitter bounced a hit off the first baseman's glove, barely beating the baseman to the bag. Pres-

cott team members came out of their dugout with a roar as Wildcat Dan Overman dusted himself off and motioned to them with his arm.

"Two on and none out and *another* Wildcat up!" shrieked the enthused East Sider as right fielder Sly Cooley approached the plate. "That's the idea! Feed 'em Wildcats, Prescott! Feed 'em Wildcats!"

But this Wildcat disappointed by popping out to short.

"Now a nice little double play!" called the Redfield catcher, "and she's all over!"

"Well, well! Here's a Terror at bat!" continued the East Sider, with Phil Stone in the batter's box. "On the nose, Phil, old boy! You're a Wildcat if you hit it!"

And Phil did hit, right down to the second baseman who, with a double play in sight, played the ball too fast and all runners were safe!

"Oh! Oh! Bases loaded and one down!" cried a Prescott rooter. "We've got a chance yet, boys!"

Redfield's chagrined second sacker carried the ball over to Ace Hudkins and presented his apologies.

"Mighty sorry I gummed that up," he said.

Ace patted his team mate on the shoulder.

"Never mind that. I'll get these next two!"

And, with this, Ace proceeded to fan Terror Tom Perry, Prescott's center fielder not so much as ticking the ball on three lusty swings.

"Atta pitching!" shouted Redfield's stocky catcher, "only one more!" He glanced over his shoulder for a look at Prescott's next batter and saw Captain Slug Pickens striding up. "And here's your meat, Ace, old soup bone! You've got this big boy's number!"

Slug scowled at the Redfield catcher.

In four trips to the plate Prescott's supposed batting star had been unable to get the ball out of the infield. He had made as poor a showing as Bingo Nelson's had been good.

The Prescott fans suppressed a groan.

"Slug hasn't hit the size of his hatband," said someone, gloomily.

And Sandy, running along beside him, shouted in his ear: "It's up to you, you big stiff—and I'm betting you don't come through!"

Captain Slug Pickens stopped and turned upon his challenger. Sandy evidently hadn't

forgotten Slug's dig at him when Bingo's hit had gotten past . . . and he'd chosen this time to get even.

"You wait!" promised Slug, getting control of himself. He turned toward the batter's box as Sandy fell away from him, crouching at a safe distance.

The eyes of Prescott's team captain snapped fire. His three team mates stared beseechingly at him from every base, making appealing gestures with their arms and shouting but their words were lost in the volley of excited sound.

Pitcher Ace Hudkins raised his arm. The ball sped down the pitching path. Slug swung.

"Strike one!"

He stepped from the box and knelt down to dust off his hands. As he raised up his glance took in the fellow he despised. Sandy was grinning.

"Strike two!"

The force of this swing all but took Slug from his feet. He had struck at a bad ball in the bargain, overeager to make a killing.

"Make 'em be good!" warned the voice of the third sacker.

Slug ground his teeth desperately, stepped

once again from the batter's box, pulled at the rim of his cap, knocked imaginary clay from the cleats of his shoes and tried to steady his nerves. If he should strike out this time . . .

"Ball one!" The stands were in a frenzy. Slug had almost swung at a high one, restraining his bat after lifting it from his shoulder.

"Ball two!" This pitch was obviously bad, a low-breaking outdrop.

"Two and two," said someone, nervously. "Bases full and two down. My throbbing heart!"

The next pitch was a fast ball, waist high and on the outside corner. Prescott's team captain saw that it was coming over, that he would have to strike at it, and he took half a step forward as the ball came whizzing up, timed its speed, and swung!

Crack!

Out between right and center fields, the fielders turned their backs on the diamond and commenced running madly toward the fence. They twisted their heads several times to take fleeting glimpses of a winging white streak and then redoubled their speed. On the base paths, maddened Prescott runners raced as though their

lives depended on it, flagged frenziedly on by raving coachers and a Prescott crowd gone wild. But, as Captain Slug Pickens rounded second, he was motioned to slow up as his terrific clout had cleared the fence, landing on the roof of a house across the street, splintering shingles as it bounced off into the yard into the proud possession of a youngster.

"A home run!" gasped the dazed Redfield crowd.

Pitcher Ace Hudkins, the picture of dejection, stood on the mound, chin against chest. This one blow had lifted Prescott from the valley of certain defeat to the hill of possible victory.

As Captain Slug Pickens touched his foot to the home plate he was met by hilarious team mates but he had eyes only for the fellow who followed him in the batting order. Stopping opposite Sandy he shook a finger in his face.

"There! How'd you like that?" he demanded and stared, open mouthed, as Sandy, pounding him on the back, shouted, "Great! I couldn't have done better myself!"

Sandy didn't do better, in fact. He flied out to end the inning but Prescott was, at last, very

much in the ball game, as evidenced by one look at the score board.

PRESCOTT 5

REDFIELD 4

"And now all *we've* got to do is hold 'em!" cried Coach Potter. "Give 'em everything you've got, gang!"

Such an admonition was superfluous. Their spirits completely rejuvenated, the Prescott nine ran back onto the field, a new team.

But Redfield refused to fold up and play dead. Their first batter scorched a single straight through the heart of the diamond. Steve Morris, Prescott's relief pitcher, taking Slim's place on the mound, and feeling keenly the responsibility which was his, momentarily lost control getting himself in the hole on the next batter, three balls to no strikes. He steadied and put two balls over for called strikes but, when forced to groove the next ball, was greeted with another single, a line drive to right which advanced the runner to third. The tying and winning runs on base in Redfield's last of the ninth and no one out!

"Yea!" cheered the Redfield stands, coming

to their feet as one man, "and Bingo's up!"

Prescott's spirits froze. The infield gathered consolingly about their substitute pitcher, wishing ardently that Slim was still in the box.

"Brace up in there, Steve! We'll pull out of this!"

"Too bad Slim had to be removed for a batter," said a Prescott fan, "we sure need his pitching now to pull us out of this!"

Shortstop Slug Pickens looked uneasily at third baseman Sandy.

"Better switch positions with me for this batter," he said.

"What's the big idea?" flashed Sandy.

"If he hits through you again it's good-by game!" was the burning retort.

Sandy's jaw set.

"I was chosen to play third and I'm going to play it!" was his answer.

With men on third and first, and the game in the balance, pitcher Steve Morris pitched carefully. His first ball was wide and Redfield's heavy hitter let it pass. He stepped from the box after the pitch and looked toward his dugout as someone called to him. Sandy, watching him intently, saw Bingo scowl and shake his

head; then, glancing toward the Redfield bench, saw the Redfield coach motion emphatically.

"What's this?" he mused.

"Hit her right down the third base line!" begged the Redfield crowd, "the old place, Bingo! Knock that third sacker's feet out from under him!"

"Break his leg!" cried a fan made irresponsible by excitement.

Prescott's third sacker flinched. Slug, nervously moving closer toward third, called out: "Better do as I say. We want to win this game!"

Sandy waved him back, impatiently. What was this signal the Redfield batter had just received? Bingo had evidently not liked it so well. Everyone was expecting him to hit. Could it be possible? . . . Sandy's heart pounded at the thought. Possible Bingo had been instructed to lay down a bunt . . . cross up the whole Prescott team which feared his terrific hitting . . . work the squeeze play . . . scoring the man from third and having a chance of advancing the man on first two bases? That's what such a play would do if it was pulled to perfection. If Bingo hit, on the con-

trary, there was the chance of his driving into a double play. A bunt, with no one out, was the safest move, providing Prescott could be caught off guard.

"If this baby really does hit, the run can't be prevented anyway," reasoned Sandy. "But if he bunts and someone's there to take the bunt, there's a chance of breaking up the play!"

An anxious Steve was raising his arm to make the next pitch. There was no time to communicate his suspicions to fellow team mates. Sandy bit his lips with indecision. Should he run down the base line with Steve's arm and risk everything on his surmise that the squeeze play was about to be attempted? If he had guessed wrong and this was to be a "hit and run" play instead, he might as well be dashing toward the mouth of a cannon for Bingo, swinging on the ball at close range, could smash it at killing force and he would be powerless to so much as get his hands up to protect himself. But Slug and the gang had insinuated that he was "spineless" . . . a quitter! . . .

As the pitch left the hand of Slim's pitching understudy the two Redfield base runners dug their cleats into the dirt.

"The 'hit and run!'" shrieked spectators warningly, and gasped in breathless horror as they saw the Prescott third baseman, keeping pace with the fast-legging Redfield runner down the third-base line toward the home plate.

An amazed Slug Pickens, sighting Sandy running in on the batter, instinctively covered third, groaning at the third sacker's madness.

Some onlookers half-closed their eyes, shudderingly, as Bingo's bat left his shoulder. The batter, with eyes only for the ball, did not glimpse the incharging third sacker. Sandy's eyes, however, had never left the man at the plate. "Would he swing on it?" he wondered, as he ran. It was either the "hit and run" or a "squeeze". . . that much was certain now.

At the last moment, it seemed, Bingo changed his stance, running one hand up the handle of his bat. He reached out and tapped the ball lightly with the base runner two-thirds of the way down the line, bringing home the tying run. Ball and bat met and the ball left the bat in a low line drive, calculated to strike the diamond about ten feet from the plate. But a white-eyed youth, putting on a last burst of speed, dove head first with arms outstretched and, in some

miraculous fashion, interposed his hands between the ground and the ball, making a fair catch of it and somersaulting as he did so.

Dumfounded shrieks burst from Redfield throats and a startled Redfield runner, about to put his foot on the plate, stabbed his cleats in the dirt instead and reversed directions, dashing frenziedly back toward third. He leaped the prostrate form of the third sacker who jabbed at him with the ball but missed and then crawled to his knees with the field a riot of beseeching sound, making a wild throw to third in an effort to double the runner. Meanwhile the Redfield runner who had left first and had already rounded second, was frantically retracing his steps.

Shortstop Slug Pickens, seeing that Sandy's throw was coming low and wide, threw himself sidewise, one foot touching the base, and scooped it out of the dirt. As he did so the base runner slid in, but too late!

"You're out!" announced the umps, and gave his dazed attention to another part of the field where first baseman Phil Stone was screaming wild nothings and holding out his hands for the

ball. Into those hands the ball came, too, just as soon as the Prescott captain could regain his feet . . . and as Phil leaped into the air to bring it down, and fell to the bag with it in advance of the fast-returning runner—insane pandemonium broke loose!

"A *triple* play!" came from the lips of all.

But Slug Pickens, in that moment of complete abandonment, could think of but one thing. He ran down the base line, seized the surprised third sacker in his arms, and hugged him joyfully.

"Sandy, you're some boy!" he cried, "What nerve! What a play! I'm not in it with you . . . not in it!"

And then his words were lost in a smothering rush of fellow players and wild-eyed fans who sought to grab the two up and parade them on jostling shoulders.

Later, in the Redfield Field House, Coach Potter had a few things to say.

"You fellows have Sandy to thank for the game you played to-day," he smiled, "When I saw how you *loved* him—I ordered him to do everything to make you love him more as I

figured it would make you forget yourselves and play the game of your lives! . . ."

The team members looked sheepish for the moment.

"I suppose at that rate," deduced Slug, grinning, "that you instructed Sandy to catch that bunt—because that's the little thing that made us *love* him *most!*"

Coach Potter shook his head, laughing.

Then Slug, approaching Sandy hesitantly, cleared his throat, eyes moist.

"Sandy," he said, quite humbly, "I've been a rotter. To begin with, you didn't hurt my arm before that Morton Tech game. But I had to have some excuse for that terrible peg . . . and then, when it looked like my error was about to lose the game . . . I figured if I could force you into an error, letting in more runs . . . you'd be blamed with me . . ."

"We were both to blame all the way through," said Sandy. "We shouldn't have bucked each other like this . . . so—let's forget it."

"Sure—*let's!*" came an answering murmur of voices from both Wildcats and Terrors.

"There's a song they sing in New York that

ought to go pretty well here," suggested Hoop, suddenly, "I've heard it on the radio . . . remember, guys? . . . 'East Side, West Side, All Around the Town'! . . ."

"Attaboy!" seconded Slim Becker, "There's no East or West Side any more, gang! Sandy's told us he wasn't anything. What do you say we join his club?"

"What club's that?"

"I guess it doesn't have any name," responded Slim, "but the membership's only open to real Prescott fellows! . . ."

"Speaking of *that,*" interrupted Sandy, "I'm probably telling something out of school . . . but now that we're all together I don't see any harm. Dad's had architects figuring on a big recreation clubhouse to be built on Look Out Point . . . a place for all sorts of sports . . . boating, swimming, tennis . . . you know . . . to fit in with the park . . . and it's to be for *all of us!*"

A cheer went up at this and Clint Evers, taking his reportorial tip from the existing evidence of good feeling as well as an important little team meeting which followed immediately thereafter, set to work on his biggest story

which—strangely and yet significantly—met with the approval of everyone when it appeared the next morning in the Prescott *Blade*, carrying these headlines:

EAST AND WEST SIDE
BURY THE HATCHET

SANDY SANDERSON
CHOSEN CAPTAIN

Next Season Points To
Another Champion Nine!

THE END

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